Strengthening 'community'? An ethnographic and auto/biographical study of Sure Start Greendale

"Now it doesn't bother me to tell people I live on Greendale"
(A Greendale Parent)

by

Mary Frances Rehal

Canterbury Christ Church University

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I certify that this work has not previously been presented in any form to the University or to any other body and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy at Canterbury Christ Church University. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others.

Signed……..

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Dedication

To the mothers of Greendale: who worked so hard with Sure Start to make life better for their children and reached out to support other mothers so that they too were no longer alone.

To my mother Mary Frances Hynes: a deeply spiritual woman who died aged 97 years during this research study and who always encouraged and gave me and my siblings a Sure Start.

ABSTRACT

This is an ethnographic, auto/biographical study of Sure Start Greendale which is situated on the outskirts of a seaside town in the south east of England. I undertook the research while I was Director of the programme. The thesis is written from the perspective of key participants in the programme, as well as my own learning biography, background in health visiting and practice as leader of a new high profile government initiative called Sure Start. It is highly reflexive and written in a narrative genre.

Sure Start aims to give young children living in communities similar to Greendale a better start in life by creating opportunities for them and their parents and by eradicating child poverty. This research explores, through auto/biographical and focus group interviews with parents, community workers and representatives from partner agencies, perspectives of the Greendale area prior to Sure Start, the impact of the Sure Start programme and the new building, and their notions of community prior to and post the establishment of the Sure Start programme. The voices of parents, community workers and partner agencies are heard through an interpretative, analytical approach in a process of shared learning. Issues relating to insider research are discussed in detail. Auto/biographical interviews indicate the challenges of partnership working, the impact of poverty on children and their parents, and the complex ways in which Sure Start helped to renew a sense of community.

The main finding of the research was that the Sure Start Greendale programme was able to engage to varying degrees a suspicious and sceptical community and support parents to access services and develop relationships with other parents. Sure Start Greendale was the enabler of communication in the estate and the community workers played a major role in building social capital and reducing social isolation. This research is important as it is the only ethnographic, auto/biographical, insider researcher's account of a Sure Start Programme, covering a period of eight years. The study adds to the body of knowledge about Greendale and similar communities and factors that assist community renewal.

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CHAPTER ONE

On Margate sands I can connect
Nothing with nothing
The broken fingernails of dirty hands
My people humble people
Who expect nothing
(T. S. Eliot, 1937)

Introduction

This research was undertaken while I was the director of Sure Start Greendale (the pseudonym used throughout), a community development programme situated on the outskirts of a seaside town in the south east of England. The thesis was written from the perspective of key participants, as well as my own learning biography, my background in health visiting, and my practice as a director and leader of a (then) new government initiative called Sure Start. The thesis is highly reflexive and written in a narrative genre.

Rationale and context - what is Sure Start?

Sure Start was one of the most high profile and important government initiatives of the new 1997 administration. It was part of a raft of policies developed to help children and families living in poverty (HMT, 1998 a & b). The emphasis was on early years and providing services of support, education and health for parent to-be, parents and young children so that children under the age of four years could have a better star in life and grow up more likely to achieve their full potential (Glass, 1999 p. 257; HMT, 1998a; HMT, 1998 a & b). The aim of Sure Start was:

> To work with parents-to-be, parents and children to promote physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children - particularly those who are disadvantaged - so that they can flourish at home and when they get to school, and thereby break the cycle of disadvantage for the current generation of young children. (Sure Start Unit, 2002)

Sure Start was different in that funding was devolved to local Sure Start partnerships and not to local statutory or voluntary organisations. It was developed and led locally with parents often taking a major role. The emphasis was on reviewing the evidence of "what works" in the UK and

elsewhere in enhancing the life chances of poor children and their parents (Glass, 1999; Melhuish and Hall, 2007). In reality there was little evidence available to assist with the development of Sure Start Greendale. There was no blueprint for success. The Sure Start programme areas were proposed by local partnerships and needed to fulfil certain criteria including the highest levels of deprivation in relation to young children, an agreed number of children and within a defined "pram pushing" distance geographical area. The Sure Start funding (£452m overall per annum for the UK) (HMT, 1998a) was available to provide additional services for all children and families within the identified Sure Start area and to help reshape and restructure the existing local services. The emphasis was on partnership working between the statutory and voluntary organisations and also on parental participation. There was an expectation Sure Start would link in locally with other government initiatives (Glass, 1999 pp. 257-258) such as the Early Excellent Centres, Children's Fund and Connexions.

There was also an expectation that Sure Start in the longer term would deliver better educational outcomes, higher levels of employment, less involvement in the criminal justice system and fewer teenage pregnancies for those who had this early years support (DfES, 2000, 2002). Each Sure Start programme offered a range of services including, outreach support, childcare, quality play opportunities, adult education programmes, child health and development support including services for children with special needs. Local Sure Start programmes could also provide services that were specific to identified local needs such as careers advice or debt management (Glass, 1999, p.258; NESS, 2002).

Most of the parents in Sure Start were mothers but the Sure Start guidelines did not differentiate between mothers and fathers. The language was problematic and I challenged aspects of the language used by the Sure Start Unit and some aspects were subsequently changed. I have discussed this further in chapter 5 'Methods and Methodology'.

Purpose of the research and research questions

The purpose of my research was to gain a greater understanding of notions of community, both theoretical and empirical, in relation to a specific community programme called Sure Start Greendale, which was delivered in the Greendale area during the years 2000 to 2008.

Community is a contested concept where issues of power, powerlessness, gender, social class, social exclusion, poverty, housing and service provision are played out and in the process contribute to creating and defining the concept in local communities.

As a researcher I wanted to see if a community-based programme called Sure Start Greendale could engage with the local community, in a way that went beyond purely the delivery of services, to a level where parents and staff working within Sure Start Greendale could play a part in developing a new model of collaboration which could bring coherence and focus to children and young families on the estate. I wanted to reflect and gain a greater understanding of the processes and ways we worked in Sure Start Greendale which placed a great emphasis on partnership working with parents reflecting the ideology of the time. I began as Director of Sure Start Greendale in 2000 and very early on in the programme understood from working with parents that *how* we did things within the programme was as important as *what* we did.

In developing the research questions, I needed questions which helped me focus on, and gain a greater understanding of, the concept of community, the Sure Start programme, the Greendale area and myself as director and researcher. I wanted to learn more about community on an estate called Greendale which was referred to as a 'community on the edge' (Carlson & West, 2005, p.4). After much deliberation, the questions I finally agreed on were:

1. What perceptions do community workers, parents and other stakeholders have of the Greendale estate and how might these have changed over time in the context of the Sure Start programme?

2. What are the factors that shape stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of community in Greendale?

3. How might someone such as the director who is part of the Sure Start co-construction shape some of the processes for better or for worse, and how can this be understood, critically and reflexively?

These will hopefully help to answer the wider question:

4. Can our understanding of community be enhanced by investigating a Sure Start intervention?

My autobiography

The concept of community has been of interest to me for many years. I was born and raised in a small farming community in Ireland and gained from that a strong sense of self-sufficiency and an understanding of the concept of interdependence. Community for me had a strong identification with a geographical area and a shared history with the local families, regular interaction with local people which was usually mutually supportive, being there for one another and being part of something that extended beyond my parents and family; it was something that had a long history, something that babies were born into and the elderly died and left, something that was constant and in harmony with the seasons.

I believed that the spirit of enquiry that motivated me to embark on this doctoral thesis began in my own childhood with my emerging understanding of personal and social injustice and the power issues related to these social constructs. My parents were in school when Ireland was still under the colonial power of Britain and I was twelve years old when the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland escalated. My formative years were peppered with regular heated political debates with my parents and six siblings. These debates were often drawn out over days and nothing seemed simple or straightforward. The topics which included religious discrimination, colonial power, army and police injustices, what was needed for peace, were all complex and interconnected, which contrasted to my experiences of being raised on a farm where things were straightforward and predictable, where there was a strong sense of self-sufficiency and an understanding of the nature of interdependence, connectedness and community.

My childhood experience of being the only pupil in our local school at that time to stammer was also significant. The headmaster regularly 'slapped' me and made me stand in the corner until I could recite various verses of poetry, which I could not. These experiences have resonated in me some very uncomfortable feelings around issues of power and powerlessness. The power relationships between individuals and also between people within organisations, and how these empower or dis-empower individuals and families, have been a major influence on me as the

director of Sure Start Greendale. My natural affinity and empathy lies with the ‘underdog’ or the powerless and this has been a driving force for my research.

These principles were very important to my parents, especially my mother. I was raised in a household where justice was a regular topic of discussion in relation to Northern Ireland. There was a general understanding that there could only be peace if there was justice. Justice was seen as a priority. The influence of the Catholic Church on my parents’ sense of fairness and right and wrong, and their experience of being part of an occupied land, undoubtedly contributed to their views on the right to self-determination. My father relayed stories on how he was ‘slapped’ at school for speaking the Irish language, which was forbidden. The Irish and colonial history we learned at school and stories we heard from elderly neighbours all influenced my upbringing and my values. The need for justice and the need to respect the right to self-determination were core principles in the many, often heated political debates in our family.

My early experiences in the UK of nursing homeless people in London influenced my developing interest in the social sciences and my decision to pursue a career in health visiting. Through nursing I was aware for the first time of a sense of being part of a hierarchical structure where roles and relationships appeared to be pre-determined. This was evident in all aspects of our work, from uniforms worn to duties undertaken. I became aware of the power issues within a large hospital community. Later I read how specific stairs within the hospital were differentiated for male and female use. The male at that time was synonymous with doctors but that was changing during my training.

Concept of community

In undertaking an extensive review of the literature, a lack of agreement was evidenced on what is community. There is evidence also that the use of the term community has gone in and out of fashion. George (1955) found 94 different definitions, which included rural community, and developed a classification of selected definitions of community according to content. He concluded that when all definitions are viewed, beyond the concept that people are involved in community, there is no complete agreement as to the nature of community. He also concluded that according to the authors defining rural community, there is agreement that it is an area of social interaction, that has one or more common ties or bonds and there is more consistency in

describing the bases of their concepts than those who are students of community in general (ibid.). These differences in relation to community and rural community echoed my own experiences as I had experienced both. In my thesis I reflect on how my heightened experiences of community influenced my role as director and researcher in Sure Start Greendale.

Tony Blair, Prime Minister (1997-2008), claimed the concept of 'community' as a core theme of government dialogue at home and abroad (Blair, 1998). Community then became a major feature in public and social policy. There was evidence that in areas with high levels of inequality where the poor and underprivileged were marginalised and socially excluded, government initiatives saw the need to promote community participation. As I shall discuss further in chapter 2, community became part of the social policy lexicon, with care in the community, community police officers, community wardens, community mental health, and programmes like Sure Start, New Deal and others that emphasised community participation. 'Community', whatever the definition and meaning, had made a comeback.

For Mayo and Craig (1995), community is about feeling, perception, about commonality and mutuality while the many associated tangible and predictable tensions, such as social isolation, racial, ethnic and religious differences, gender and sexual orientation issues are masked. According to Hoggett (1997), following numerous sociological studies and much analysis of 'community' there is still ambiguity about the precise term, though it does include the significant concepts of support, collaboration, communication, common networks, shared identity and has both moral and practical elements. These ideas will be discussed further in chapter 3.

The Greendale area

This research took place in Greendale, a small estate situated in the south easterly outskirts of a seaside town in the south east of England. Greendale is within a few miles of the shoreline at the confluence of the Thames estuary. Although classified as an urban development, the estate has on its south westerly perimeter a large communal grassed area known as Greendale Green. This area is flanked by the commuter railway line connecting the local towns with London. Beyond the railway line and on the south of the estate there are large areas of quality arable land, where cauliflowers, cabbages, Brussels sprouts and potatoes are grown.

The Greendale estate was built in 1974 by a speculative property developer. Due to financial difficulties the development was not fully completed, but was purchased by the district council and used to house large numbers of housing priority families, not only from the local district but also from the neighbouring three districts as well as some families from London.

Greendale straddles the local wards of Southdown Park and Valley Green, but boundary lines have changed during the course of this research study. The Sure Start Greendale boundary contains the Greendale and Valley Green areas and consists of a housing estate which extends at equidistance on both sides of the Greendale Road which runs from Clintonville in the north east to Valley Green on the south west. There was no local industry, and prior to the development of the Sure Start building on Valley Green, there was no focal point for residents on the estate. There were two public houses; both in a poor state of repair, and both had frequent changes of proprietors over the course of this research. A local Scout hut was used by community groups but was in a very poor state of repair and needed demolition and rebuilding. There were two primary schools, one for children with additional needs, with a dwindling roll as a result of government policy of mainstreaming pupils with additional needs; the other 'Southdown' had 76% of pupils in reception class on the Special Needs Audit in 1999 (Sure Start Greendale Delivery Plan, 2000).

Greendale has been referred to as 'a classic sink estate' (Buck et al., 1990) and a community 'on the edge' (Carlson and West, 2005, p.4). It has high levels of single parent families and long term unemployment and in one view, has the 'worst reputation of any area in Thanet' (Buck et al., 1990). 75% of residents were in receipt of housing benefit in 1997, while unemployment rose from 13.5% in 1991 to 16% in 1996. A high level of households received income support, while 138 children lived in families on low income, and 138 children lived in single parent households receiving housing benefit (Sure Start Greendale, 2002). Greendale is discussed further in chapter 4.

To research the concept of community on the Greendale estate and to explore stakeholder perceptions of the Sure Start Greendale programme with myself being central to this as director

and researcher, a reflexive methodology written in a narrative genre appeared the way forward. I have chosen to describe it as an auto/biographical study with elements of ethnography and action research and interrogate these meanings in full, later in chapter 5. The term ethnographer literally translates from its root words as "one who writes about people" (Grills, 1998).

> In the writing we make decisions about the story we will tell - how the story will be made theoretically interesting, what questions we will engage with in our work, and what aspect of our research will be presented and what will be set aside. (Grills, 1998, p.13)

By auto/biography I mean the "written story of a person's life" (Webster's Dictionary). I was influenced by the work of Stanley (1992, p.3) and her assertion of the interconnectedness between the building of one's own life story through autobiography and the building of another's life story through biography. These productions that we create of others in outlining their life stories include and expose our own history and they also provide cultural and social contexts. In this thesis I have made decisions about the story I tell about parents' perceptions of the Greendale estate prior to Sure Start, their perceptions of the Sure Start programme and how it has impacted on their lives.

Reflexive approach

I was concerned with developing a critical understanding of the concept of community in developing and delivering a community-based local programme. I was interested in how, as the director of the programme, I influenced the development of the programme through many stages. Freire's ideas about praxis were highly influential:

> It must be emphasised that the praxis by which consciousness is changed is not only action but action and reflection. Thus there is a unity between practice and theory in which both are constructed, shaped, and reshaped in constant movement from practice to theory, then back to new practice. (Freire, 1985, p.124)

It is through this process of praxis, Freire argues, that we can raise awareness of our situations and circumstances and work to transform them. In this context it is not enough that we reflect in order to know or understand, it is necessary to reflect in order to make a difference, to bring

about change. Praxis is a self-directed process springing from our core professional values, demanding that we continuously consider the impact and effects of our own actions. Praxis involves honouring our experiences and relating it to theory, and thinking deeply about future actions (ibid.). My research was undertaken in an open and transparent way. I talked to parents and staff about my research and explored with them specific issues that arose. I understood that my research would be open to criticism as I was the director of the programme I was researching, and so I used my experience of working on the Greendale estate for eight years to gain insight to this specific community in ways not open to others.

My background and motivation

I came to London at the age of 18 to train as a nurse. I was very much on my own as I had no family members or relatives or friends in England. I always wanted to work with people and caring for the sick appealed to me. Nurse training at a major London hospital afforded me rich life experiences. Early on in my training I experienced and learned to cope with the hospital routines, patient deaths, grieving relatives and a range of team working and other experiences. I experienced for the first time a multi-cultural environment and became conscious of my own identity. On reflection I was very much an outsider on this course. I had come from a rural setting in the west of Ireland to a very large multi-cultural teaching hospital in London. This outsider perspective helped me to understand and question more fully some of the practices I experienced as a student nurse. As Denscombe (2007, p. 129) says: "The outsider might be better placed to see the kind of thing which, to the insider, is too mundane, too obvious". I was approaching the group "without a history" (Schutz, 1976, p. 107), I was completely new to the hospital, and the culture, ethos, staff and students were unknown to me. Schutz refers to the stranger:

> The stranger...approaches the other group as a newcomer in the true meaning of the term. At best he may be able to share the present and the future...however he remains excluded from such experiences of its past. Seen from the point of view of the approached group, he is a man without a history (Schutz, 1976, p.104).

My experiences also helped me challenge my own perspective on issues such as death, abortion, organ transplants and equality. It was my experience of a child protection issue on the paediatric ward that influenced me to train as a health visitor. An Afro-Caribbean boy aged about two years was admitted with severe head injuries. He was very ill. His parents stayed with him on the ward. The medical and nursing staff talked about his head injuries being non-accidental but this was not discussed with the parents. I thought that this was not right and raised it with the ward sister. With hindsight, my observations may have been ignored due to my lack of status within the hierarchical organisation, but I felt that it was important to raise it as I sensed that the parents were being judged by the staff. On reflection, these feelings were all the more heightened by the words of Schutz:

> Therefore, the stranger discerns, frequently with a grievous clear sightedness, the rising of a crisis which may menace the whole foundation of the 'relatively natural conception of the world', while all those symptoms pass unnoticed by the members of the in-group, who rely on the continuance of their customary way of life (Schutz, 1976, p. 110).

The parents needed support but this could not be provided due to the situation on the ward. I knew then I wanted to work with young families, to support parents, to try and prevent child abuse and to support those on the outside those on the margins of society. Although I was working on the inside in this situation, my background, my life experiences and my sense of fairness helped me question practices on the ward and I could empathise with the parents and their feelings of being alone and on the outside. It felt very uncomfortable for me at the time. Looking back, this experience in part shaped my career choice and it also helped me understand more fully issues of power and influence and how to make changes that would benefit children and families (Jensen et al., 1999).

Embarking on a research project

This reflexive narrative was legitimised and considered through many viewpoints provided by personal, professional and academic experiences. I explored my own life story and reflected on events that have influenced my thinking and understanding, including my roles as a health

visitor, manager, director and also as a researcher and doctoral student. In reflecting on these parallel life events, I examined how experiences of each have influenced my thinking and understanding.

On reflection, issues of power and powerlessness have resonated in all aspects of my role as a Sure Start director and as a researcher. My experiences enabled me to have a greater understanding of power issues and a greater empathy with those experiencing powerlessness; they also influenced me to study and research aspects of power and powerlessness in relation to individuals and groups that feel marginalised. My early experiences and memories, together with my on-going day to day experiences both at work and in my family life, have shaped my perspective on life and death, on what is important to me and on how I can improve the life chances of children and families. These experiences form a nexus and are woven through the thesis.

In a paper on why practitioners do research, Fletcher, makes the point that: "There is a right time for practitioner research" (Fletcher 1993). The right time is when after initial training and qualification and after some years of experience the professional feels ready for another substantial step. This professional can say:

- my profession is worthy and honourable;
- I am good at my job and I intend to stick with it;
- I have doubts and difficulties about how things are going;
- I am ready for a fresh challenge which involves stepping back to reflect and stepping forward to find out more;
- I have courage and I can write;
- I don't want to change jobs just yet;
- I could do with variety and career enhancement;
- In my personal life I have most or all of the support that I need

(Fletcher, 1993, p.17).

Fletcher makes the point that research is about stepping back rather than getting even more embroiled. He argues that it does involve letting some concerns go, leaving some minutiae unattended, but that it can also be therapeutic, helping to get the job into perspective and

establish some new priorities. With this in mind I was ready to embark on my doctoral research. A further discussion of my multiple roles as director and researcher is in chapter 6.

Researcher's timeline

I was appointed Sure Start director in August 2000 and was accepted on the PhD programme at Canterbury Christ Church University in 2004. I left the Sure Start programme to take up a full time management position in the local district in 2008. I continued to gather some research data after leaving the programme. I submitted my PhD thesis in 2015. Further details of my researcher's timeline can be seen in Appendix 1.

The next section outlines the rest of the thesis. A brief description of each chapter is provided, together with an outline of how the chapters link together and give coherence to the overall research thesis.

Outline of thesis

Chapter 1 introduces the thesis and its rationale, includes a brief autobiography and description of the Greendale estate, and summarises the thesis contents.

Chapter 2 explores the development of High/Scope Perry pre-school programme (1962), Head Start (1965), Elmira (1977) and Early Head Start (1994) in the USA, and how these went on to influence early years investment in the UK. All four programmes invested in early years. All were targeted on children living in poverty with Sure Start also including those children not living in poverty within the identified local geographical area. The second part of the chapter traces the development of the Sure Start programme in the UK, from its inception through to mainstreaming into Sure Start children's centres and the transfer of Sure Start to the responsibility of local authorities. Evaluation of the impact through the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) is also discussed. Policy developments and changes in emphasis are explored during the course of the Sure Start programme. Links are also established with other policy developments such as childcare, early education and family policy initiatives.

Chapter 3 explores the concept of community and community development within a literature review. It seeks to define community and the part it played in social policy and many (then) new Government initiatives. Clark's model (1996) of community is explored with the concept of solidarity and interdependence as positive factors. Issues of power and powerlessness in the context of Sure Start Greendale as a community on the margins are also examined.

Chapter 4 sets the scene for the research and describes in some detail the Greendale estate where the research took place. It traces the history of the estate and how it came to be chosen as the site for the Trailblazer Sure Start programme. It describes the local district and the issues that impacted on local communities, especially Greendale. The researcher's first impressions as the director of Sure Start are explored, as are the initial views of parents and children. The Sure Start Greendale programme is described in detail and includes the setting up of the services, the acquisition of accommodation and the development of partnership working. It also explores the beginnings of a community development approach and an early external evaluation report. A new model of working which was developed in the Greendale estate is illustrated and discussed.

Chapter 5 describes the methods and methodologies of this research study in detail. It draws together aspects from previous chapters including the setting for the research study, the theoretical concepts, ethical considerations, and the rationale for the chosen research approach. It explores the values and principles of the researcher, giving consideration to trustworthiness, privacy, informed consent, ethical and confidentiality issues. The research methodologies are introduced together with the rationale. A discussion of reflexive methodologies follows, including auto/biographical, ethnographic and elements of action research. The concept of Listening Visits is also introduced. The empirical part of the research is then explained and the specific case studies introduced. Finally, the importance of language is explored in telling the Greendale story and methods of data analysis are introduced.

Chapter 6 covers the development of the Sure Start Greendale programme and the three main phases in which roles changed: the first phase covers setting up and establishing the programme, during which time I was the director of the programme but not researching it; the second phase covers the period in which I was both director and researcher; and the third phase, in which I am

researcher but no longer director. In each phase I draw on critical incidents and discuss them in relation to the literature. I explore the practicalities and the ethics of 'insider research' as experienced during the eight year period (four years as director and researcher) within the Sure Start Greendale programme.

Chapter 7 traces the development of the Sure Start Greendale community worker role, its contribution to the expanding provision of services, the planning and delivery of the capital project and the changing nature of the programme to meet the needs of the local community. Data from the community worker interviews are analysed and discussed within the framework of building community in the Greendale estate, including one community worker's account which is explored in detail. Other themes such as education, schools and transport are identified and discussed.

Chapter 8 gives an overview of parents' perspectives on a range of issues, drawing on interviews and focus groups, including moving into the estate, isolation, loss, developing relationships and engaging with Sure Start. It goes on to trace the experiences of two mothers in detail, who lived in the estate for many years. These mothers moved to Greendale before the Sure Start Programme began and remained there throughout the period of the research. It also explores the impact of auto/biographical interviews on some of the parent research participants.

Chapter 9 reviews the data from interviews with partner agency representatives. These include a retired health professional who had worked on Greendale, an administrative support officer and a member of the Sure Start Greendale management board. Towards the end of the chapter there is cross cutting thematic analysis of key themes identified in the auto/biographical narratives and discussion on a leadership model which was developed in Sure Start Greendale.

Chapter 10 addresses the research questions and brings together the main themes generated from the data analysis chapters. It reflects on the importance of this research in relation to gaining a greater understanding of Greendale a 'community' which is disadvantaged and disenfranchised and examines in some detail the significance and impact of this research. It reflects on the changes to the voting patterns of people in the Greendale area and in the UK in relation to the

Brexit result following the EU referendum on June 23rd 2016. I was aware from the time I started work in Greendale how marginalised and disenfranchised it was. It had the lowest voter turnout in the county and now in 2016 it had two new polling stations on the estate both in the Sure Start building. As a researcher studying community I was interested in the voter outcomes for the Greendale estate in relation to the referendum. Would the people in Greendale come out to vote?

The chapter also examines the contribution to knowledge and the transferability of the research findings. It also reflects on and critiques the research methodologies used including the insider researcher/outsider researcher. It explores the research findings in the context of a recent political decision; the Brexit EU referendum result. It proposes that the research findings could be generalised to other populations and communities in the UK. It documents the conclusions of the research study. It evidences how this study contributes to the current research and knowledge base. Finally it calls for more research studies in communities like Greendale, so that more knowledge can be generated to help support a greater understanding of the many issues facing such communities.

In the next chapter, the national and international origins of the influences behind Sure Start are discussed, as well as its development in the UK.

CHAPTER TWO

Sure Start: the International and National Context

> Sure Start is an innovative, cross-departmental and pioneering programme which fulfils the Government's undertaking to improve support for families and children before and from birth until their fourth birthday. Building upon the start made by statutory and voluntary agencies locally, Sure Start aims to transform the life chances of younger children through better access to family support, advice on nurturing, health services, family education and constructive play. It will focus on disadvantage and be open to all families in the [Greendale] area, reinforcing the attachment between family members. (Sure Start Greendale Delivery Plan, 2000)

Introduction

In this chapter I first examine the development of the High Scope (1962), Head Start (1965), Elmira (1977) and Early Head Start (1994) programmes in the USA. In all four programmes, the aim was that early intervention could enhance children's educational achievement and counter the impact of poverty on development. I also explore some of the responses in the UK to these developments.

In the second part of the chapter I trace the development of Sure Start in the UK from its inception through to mainstreaming into Sure Start children centres and the moving of Sure Start to the responsibility of local authorities. I also review the impact of Sure Start through the National Evaluation and explore other perspectives of the evaluation. The policy development of Sure Start local programmes is examined (SSLP) and the changes and different emphasis given to the programme during the first ten years are traced. The development of Sure Start is linked with other broader childcare, early education and family policy initiatives.

USA: High Scope, Head Start, Early Head Start and Elmira projects

In the USA, Head Start and other early intervention programmes were developed as an important element of the war on poverty during the Kennedy and Johnson presidencies (Welshman, 2010). During the 1950s and 1960s, there had been major advancement in experts' perceptions of children's intellectual development. Bronfenbrenner (1977) defied the commonly held belief at the time that Intelligence Quotient (IQ) was predetermined at birth and to a great degree this could not be changed. He disputed that IQ was governed purely by biology. His research showed that a child's IQ was also influenced by upbringing, surroundings and conditions experienced by the child. There was now more evidence to support investment in early years to combat the effects of disadvantaged childhood and prompted the development of early years education programmes in the USA.

The first major early intervention programme from the USA was High Scope Perry Pre-school project, 1962-7, that emphasised active learning with children (Schweinhart et al., 2011). It was a relatively small project, focusing on 123 low-income African-American children who were deemed to be at risk of school failure. 58 of these received a high quality pre-school programme at three and four years old, whilst the other 65 received no intervention programme, an approach that we might now consider unethical. Evaluations have been longitudinal, taking place at regular intervals between the ages of 3-40 (ibid.). The intervention group was found to have significantly outperformed the control group in terms of language development, educational achievement and employment success. Economically, the programme has demonstrated that "for every $1 spent in the programme $7 in public expenditure was saved in later life" (calculated at age 27, ibid.). The early successes of this programme may have given rise to other, more extensive early intervention initiatives.

The second early intervention programme in the USA was Head Start which had larger numbers of children serving around 560,000 (Welshman, 2010) but a much shorter period of intervention with an eight week course delivered during the summer. There have been numerous research studies on the value and impact of the programme with the findings suggestive of a low cost low impact programme (Vinovskis, 2005). The evaluation findings of this programme are somewhat contradictory and inconclusive, owing to factors such as lack of standardisation and

comparability of the interventions (Roberts, 2000). More recently, a follow-up study on outcomes for third grade pupils who had attended the Head Start Programme showed few statistical differences apart from, contrary to assumptions, the social benefits of *less* exposure to academic activities for those children who attended higher quality Head Start programmes (those with qualified teachers) (Peck & Bell, 2014): 'for three year-olds, lower exposure to academic activities is associated with more favourable short-run impacts on social development' (ibid. p.23).

A more health-focused early intervention programme, the Elmira Prenatal/Early Infancy project (Olds et al., 1997) was set up in 1977, with 400 women deemed high-risk in the Elmira area of New York State. The aim of the project was to provide home visits by qualified nurses to pregnant women and their families, to promote health and reduce child neglect and abuse. A longitudinal evaluation found that the health of nurse-visited mothers improved significantly and also positively affected infant birth weights (ibid.). Nurse-visited children had fewer behavioural and parental coping problems and their mothers were observed to be more involved with their children than were mothers in the comparison groups. Longer term, the programme had a positive impact on child abuse rates (ibid.). Overall, the programme demonstrated over $24,000 savings on benefits from a $6,000 investment per mother-child pair, and influenced policy development in Canada, Australia and then in the UK through the Family Nurse Partnerships.

Although the outcomes of the Head Start programme were not conclusive, the Elmira programme was relatively successful and prompted the establishment of an Early Head Start programme with services being made available to low- income families with a child aged three and under (Welshman, 2010). The aims of the programme were very similar to the UK Sure Start programme. There were over 700 Early Head Start programmes serving over 61,000 children three and under by 2003, with an allocated budget of $654m (Kamerman and Khan, 2004). The impact of this more extensive intervention programme was also evaluated over a long period (1996-2010) (e.g. US DHHS, 2002; Vogel et al., 2010) and some modest benefits were identified, including some positive impact on children's social-emotional development and on parenting behaviours. However, the impact on children's language development was more mixed (Love, 2010), with positive impacts appearing to diminish over time.

These US intervention programmes were highly influential in the UK from the 1960s onwards, as we shall see, as well as later in Australia, which introduced A Head Start for Australia in New South Wales (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2004). Evidence from Australia showed that good quality early intervention although costly at the outset was value for money in terms of outcomes (Karoly, et al., 1998; Stanley, 2001). There was also some caution around some of the findings (Foley, et al., 2000), and this depended on the quality and length of programmes.

Impact of Head Start and other US developments in the UK

One of the UK responses to the Head Start programme could be seen in the Plowden Report (CACE, 1967) with the setting up of the Education Priority Areas (EPAs). The report was underpinned with the premise that homes and environments in deprived areas provided little support and stimulus for learning and schools must provide a "compensatory environment" (ibid.). Members of the Plowden Committee had visited large numbers of schools, colleges and universities throughout the USA (Welshman, 2010) and the report drew on these experiences. The Committee members also noted during their visit to the USA that a range of authorities both voluntary and statutory were providing substantial funding for programmes of early education to combat the effects of extreme disadvantage (CACE, 1967). Despite the emergence of negative research findings on Head Start, the poverty models in the USA and the increasing debate and new research on the nature of child development and the potential of intervention all influenced the evaluation of the EPAs.

Another policy initiative in the UK which was influenced by the Head Start programme was the expansion of nursery education by the Conservative government (DES, 1972). This was generally a more substantial and earlier intervention than Head Start, in that it included younger children (Hannon and Fox, 2005). The interventions were focussed on areas of need and generally enjoyed increased interest and political support, but there was little research on the impact or the development of more intensive interventions. Keith Joseph then Secretary of State for Social Services (1970-1974) drew on evidence from the USA and USSR which placed the UK at the bottom of an international league table of parental involvement with their children

(Bronfenbrenner, 1970) and focussed on the concept of the cycle of deprivation. However, Joseph made controversial speeches (Yergin and Stainislaw, 1998), asking whether poor, unmarried single girls should become mothers in such record numbers and blamed the Fabian socialists as the originators of the social ills of Britain. He sought to influence public opinion and change the culture, by moving to a culture of wealth creation not one of subsidising unemployment (Joseph, 1974). Others viewed early intervention programmes differently: Halsey (1972) for example, noted that some of the American programmes deemed that early intervention and a restructure of the education system could eliminate poverty.

Although during the early 1970s under a Conservative government there was some expansion of nursery provision (DES, 1972), there was however no political will to make further substantial investment in early years. After the election of the Labour government in February 1974, there was more interest in addressing poverty in general with a focus on inequalities among adults, as opposed to a focus on early years (Welshman, 2010). With high unemployment and welfare spending restrictions in the 1970s, and from 1979 another Conservative government that had no particular interest in poverty issues, it was experiences such as the widespread emphasis on the development of market forces rather than investment in early intervention that were drawn from US experiences in the early 1980s (ibid.).

However, it was not a new idea in the UK to intervene early in the lives of young people to enable them to do well later in life (Tizard, Moss and Perry, 1976). In the field of health, the idea can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century with the establishment of the health visitor service which explicitly focussed on improving the outcomes of children from birth (ibid.). There was also a national, well established playgroup initiative which provided sessional play opportunities in most neighbourhoods for children aged three years to school age (ibid.). The re-analysis of findings from well-designed pre-school programmes in the USA of the 1960s and 1970s found significant evidence of long-term benefits (Lazar and Darlington, 1982). These findings began to influence policy development in the UK, with renewed interest in preschool intervention, by then conceived of not just in educational terms, but also including more emphasis on families, parental involvement and inter-agency programmes, with health and social benefits, in addition to educational ones (Ball, 1994).

Origins of the Sure Start programme

Sure Start was set up in 1998 as part of the Labour government's policy to reduce poverty, prevent social exclusion and improve the life chances of young children through better access to early education and play, health services for children and parents, family support and advice on nurturing (HMT, 1998a). The Sure Start programme emerged from the UK government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) (HMT, 1998a), set up soon after the Labour government came into power in 1997. One of the priorities of the CSR was investment in early childhood and the setting up of 250 local Sure Start programmes in England for young children from birth to aged 3 (ibid., para.21). This had been a recommendation of a Cross-Departmental Review of Services for Young children (hereafter called the Review), commissioned by Marjorie Smith of the Thomas Coram Research Unit (Smith et al., 1998), and chaired by Norman Glass, an economist working at the time as a Treasury civil servant. The Review brought together an accumulation of knowledge that successful intervention in the earliest years offered the greatest potential for making a difference (Glass, 1999; Melhuish and Hall, 2007). Social research findings were undoubtedly influential in the CSR (Johnson, 2011), as can be seen in the brief history of the cross-departmental Review below.

This Review of young children's services (HMT, 1998b) was different in that it sought the views not only of government departments and statutory organisation but also from large voluntary organisation such as the National Children's Bureau (Glass, 1999). As a result visits were planned to early years' services in Manchester and Sheffield and contact was made with early years' services in Haringey and also with the Pre-School Learning Alliance (ibid.). A number of academics and campaigning groups with an interest in children's services contacted the review and shared their views. In the event there was considerable expertise among policy makers and academics eager to play a part in the development of the policy (Johnson, 2011). Ministers (including Tessa Jowell who had played a lead role in the development of the early Sure Start programmes) therefore agreed to hold a series of seminars to share the available research evidence, attended by leading academics in the field (Glass, 1999; Johnson, 2011).

The seminar outcomes (Johnson, 2011; Melhuish and Hall, 2007) reflected a view that current provision of services appeared, in many cases, to be failing those in greatest need. Participants

argued that there was evidence from programmes like Head Start and Perry Pre-School programmes in the USA, (although we have seen that this evidence was contradictory), as well as experimental programmes in the UK, that comprehensive early years' programmes could make a difference to children's lives. The resulting report from the Review that Tessa Jowell presented to the Cabinet Committee overseeing the CSR (HMT, 1998b) included the fact that the earliest years in life were the most important for child development, and that very early development was much more vulnerable to environmental influences than had previously been realised. Evidence was presented that multiple disadvantage for young children was a severe and growing problem, with such disadvantage greatly enhancing the chances of social exclusion later in life. The quality of service provision for young children and their families varied enormously across localities and districts, with uncoordinated and patchy services being the norm in many areas. Services were particularly dislocated for the under four-year age group who tended to get missed out from other government programmes. It was argued in the cross-departmental Review (HMT, 1998b) that the provision of a full range of neighbourhood based interventions for young children and families which augmented current service provision, could have a constructive and ongoing impact not only on the children and families involved but also assist in breaking the cycle of deprivation and thus benefit the exchequer (Glass, 1999).

The Review of young children's services (HMT, 1998b) proposed a programme called "Sure Start" which was non prescriptive but endorsed the concepts of involving parents as well as children, which would be two generational, neighbourhood driven, involving all children and families and local residents, being culturally aware and receptive to the needs of the local population (Glass, 1999; Johnson, 2011; Melhuish and Hall, 2007). Sure Start was to provide additional services on top of what was already available locally and had an expenditure of about £200m a year. The budget was to be ring-fenced and used only to fund Sure Start programmes (HMT, 1998a). 500 programmes were agreed for England by 2004 and this covered around one third of all children living in poverty (Glass, 2001).

Naomi Eisenstadt was appointed as the first director of the Sure Start unit, having been director of the social exclusion task force. She reported, "The design of Sure Start proved enormously difficult" (Eisenstadt, 2011, p.53). There were political, personality and strongly held scientific

arguments about the evaluation of Sure Start. Politicians wanted evidence on the ground of programmes being delivered (NESS, 2005) and they could not countenance Sure Start not being a success. The importance of children ("Education, education, education") and of families ("We will strengthen family life") was in the Labour Party Manifesto (1997). It seemed to take on added importance with the Prime Minister's commitment to end child poverty by 2020 and the Chancellor's commitment to halve child poverty by 2010 (Glass 2001). The UK's outlier position, with high rates of child poverty compared to most of our European neighbours was clearly a position which the Government found intolerable (ibid.).

Sure Start local programmes were one of many policies of the government in relation to children and families. The role of the health visitor was strengthened. Parenting was highlighted and the National Family and Parenting Institute (James, 2009) established, and nursery provision for all four years olds was promoted. There was help for families on low income through the Working Families Tax Credit and the child care tax credit. The combined effects of these initiatives were projected to take about ten cent of children out of poverty, thus reducing to one quarter rather than one third those living in poverty (Piachaud and Sunderland, 2002). Child support arrangements were modernised to ensure that non-resident parents met their financial responsibilities, while Educational Maintenance Allowances were there to help families to support young people further their education. Helping families to balance work and home was effected through the implementation of the Working Time Directive, and improved parental leave provision. In addition, the National Childcare Strategy (DfES, 2004b) (to be discussed later in the chapter) was being developed to ensure that all parents had adequate child care options on the choice of working or stay at home (Glass 1999, p.258). These were in addition to initiatives that were being taken forward in the Department of Education and Employment on childcare, nursery education and schools, and in the Social Exclusion Unit, many of whose reports were concerning children and families, to the Department of Health and its Quality Protects initiative (DoH, 1998; Glass 2001).

First Sure Start Programmes (SSLPs)

The first Sure Start programmes, announced in 1998 (HMT, 1998a) had four main objectives: to advance the social and emotional development of the young child through the promotion of

secure attachments between parents and their children; to improve health outcomes through teaching parents about childcare and health, to enhance children's ability to learn by providing and fostering high quality nurturing environments, and to bolster families and communities, by engaging local parents and residents in building social capital and developing routes out of poverty for families (Roberts, 2000; Sure Start Unit, 2000; NESS, 2002a). Full details of the objectives are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Objectives of Sure Start (Sure Start Unit, 2000)

Objective 1: improving social and emotional development, in particular, by supporting early bonding between parents and their children, helping families to function and by enabling the early identification and support of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The target was: to reduce the proportion of children aged 0-3 in the 500 Sure Start areas who are re-registered within the space of 12 months on the child protection register by 20% by 2004. The delivery targets were: All local Sure Start programmes to have agreed and implemented, culturally sensitive way, ways of caring for and supporting mothers with post-natal depression. One hundred per cent of families with young children to have been contacted by local programmes within the first two months of birth.
Objective 2: improving health, in particular, by supporting parents in caring for their children to promote healthy development before and after birth. The target was: to achieve by 2004 in the 500 Sure Start areas, a 10 percent reduction in mothers who smoke during pregnancy. The delivery targets were: parenting support and information to be available for all parents in Sure Start areas. All local programmes to give guidance on breastfeeding, hygiene and safety. A 10 percent reduction in children in the Sure Start areas aged 0-3 admitted to hospital as an emergency with gastro-enteritis, a respiratory infection or a severe injury.
Objective 3: improving children's ability to learn, in particular, by encouraging high quality environments and childcare that promote early learning, provide stimulating and enjoyable language skills and ensure early identification and support of children with special needs. The target was: to achieve by 2004 for children in the 500 Sure Start areas, a reduction of five percent points in the number of children with speech and language problems requiring specialist intervention by the age of 4. The Delivery targets were: All children in Sure Start areas to have access to quality play and learning opportunities, helping progress towards early learning goals when they get to school. Increased use of libraries by families with young children in Sure Start areas.
Objective 4: strengthening families and communities, in particular, by involving families in building the community's capacity to sustain the programme and thereby create pathways out of poverty. The target was: to reduce the number of 0-3 year old children in Sure Start areas living in households where no one is working by at least 12 per cent by 2004. The delivery targets were: seventy five percent of families reporting personal evidence of an improvement in the quality of services providing family support, all Sure Start programmes to have parent representation on the local programme board, all Sure Start

programmes to have developed local targets ensuring links between the local Sure Start partnership and Employment Service Jobcentres, all Sure Start programmes to work with their EYDCP to help close the gap between the availability of accessible childcare for 0-3 year olds in Sure Start areas and other areas.

Initially Sure Start was set up as a time limited, specialist, area-based, cross-departmental government initiative, but as time and policy progressed it became a permanent part of the welfare state. The first 60 trailblazer programmes were announced in 1999 and this was followed by an announcement to extend this to 250 Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs) by 2002 (NESS, 2002a). The programmes were targeted at the 20% most deprived areas (Johnson, 2011; Melhuish and Hall, 2007). Locally, Sure Start Greendale was the only trailblazer programme in Kent; it was inaccurate for Eisenstadt to state in her book that there were two (Eisenstadt, 2011 p.33).

The 2002 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSP) revised the main aim of Sure Start and its Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets. The aims of Sure Start were now to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by:

> Increasing the availability of childcare for all children, improving the health education and emotional development for young children, supporting parents as parents and in their aspirations towards employment (DfES, 2002, p7)

The main changes from the 1998 CSR (HMT, 1998a) have been highlighted in bold:

> **Increase the availability of childcare for all children**, and work with parents to be; parents and children to promote the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, so that they can flourish at home and at school, **enabling their parents to work and contributing to the ending of child poverty** (HMT, 2002, p.43).

There were two major changes in the revised aims of Sure Start: the ambition to increase childcare for all ages and the commitment to enable parents to work, thus contributing to the ending of child poverty and contributing to the tax receipts to the Treasury. The earlier statements from 1998 to 2000 were about ameliorating the effects of poverty on low-income families in the current generation so as to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty (HMT, 1998a); whereas policy development from 2000 sought to reduce the current levels of child poverty through reducing the number of children living in workless households. There were

many initiatives outside of Sure Start to address the issue of parents being in work and also living in poverty (Glass 1999 p. 258). These were huge issues for SSLP areas, as on average almost half of all children under four years were living in workless households (Barnes et al. 2007, p31). This brought together two major policy goals for the Labour government: reducing child poverty and improving longer-term outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The early Sure Start Programmes were run on a community development ethos (NESS, 2002a). They were structured to allow local people, particularly parents, to participate fully in determining the content and management of the programmes, in light of what they thought was needed and wanted locally (Lewis, 2011). The delivery plans for all Sure Start local programmes (SSLPs) needed to show how parents and the local community were engaged in the consultation and planning of the programme (NESS, 2002a). Many plans were not endorsed by the Minister due to the lack of evidence of parent and community participation; Sure Start Greendale was one of those programmes initially (ibid.). The challenges of partnership working, the difficulties of engaging local parents and the lack of clarity around the purpose of Sure Start Greendale all contributed to the Delivery Plan being rejected by the Minister on a few occasions and returned to the Greendale Partnership for further work. Programmes were encouraged to test out 'what works'; in the local community and to understand 'how it works', so that lessons could be learned and shared. There was also an expectation that some interventions would not work and that learning from mistakes would be positive and a change from the prevalent blame culture in public service provision.

Community development takes time: Melhuish and Hall (2007) argue that the rollout of SSLPs was too fast, and that the advice of key stakeholders, such as Glass and Eisenstadt, was ignored. Disadvantaged communities had to be persuaded to participate, and their natural suspicion led them to hang back until there was some evidence to show. However, community development was central to, and one of the most attractive features of the programmes (Johnson, 2011). Community control was championed by David Blunkett, in particular, who believed that better outcomes for children would come from building social capital in communities, despite difficulties. He went on to say what Sure Start should be:

> I don't think it could have worked without local government's benevolent support but …we've got to have a much more communitarian approach....where local government act as the support for developed activities within neighbourhood, not solely as the provider (Blunkett cited in Eisenstadt, 2011, p.149-50).

Blunkett wanted Sure Start to be in the control of local communities and not under the governance of local authorities or other statutory bodies who were seen as supporting the programmes to get off the ground and then freeing them so that local, parent-dominated management boards could take over (NESS, 2002a). As things needed to happen to a strict timetable with headline targets, then community development had to take a back seat.

The 'joining-up' often worked well locally, with local agencies supporting the development of the programmes, but at a national level there were problems. The national Sure Start programme was driven initially by the Departments of Health and Education working together. The public health minister had the day to day lead. Following a cabinet restructure and ministerial changes Sure Start became the sole responsibility of the DfES and, rather worryingly at the time, was run by a joint DfES/Department for Work and Pensions government minister. This raised major concerns as now Sure Start was caught up in the 'employability' agenda: researchers (e.g. Johnson, 2011; Melhuish and Hall, 2007) argue that, contrary to the evidence-led initiatives behind the original plans for Sure Start (HMT, 1998a & b), later developments revealed political agendas at the expense of evidence.

By 2004 it was announced that the new Sure Start Children's Centres first described in the Childcare Review in 2002 (DfES, 2002) were to replace the SSLPs and were to be the main service strategy for alleviating poverty in families with young children (HMT, 2004). Although the specific public service agreement (PSA) targets for these aims remained broadly the same as those of 2000, these changes were greeted with dismay (Eisenstadt, 2011, p.73-74), by those who saw the SSLPs being hijacked by the employment agenda. According to Eisenstadt (2011), some were angry about there being an emphasis on mothers of young children going out to work, which seemed at odds with the original premise of improving outcomes for children, while others were frustrated with programme changes before they had even established their SSLPs. However, some welcomed the changes as they had worked when their children were young and wanted to support those parents who had employment aspirations (ibid.).

As the CSR periods overlapped (HMT, 2002 & 2004), at any one time SSLPs were trying to address two different sets of PSA targets and at the same time trying to get programmes established and capital projects delivered. The targets were aimed at fully operational programmes, but it was taking around three years for programmes to be fully operational (Meadows, 2007, p.121). The plan was to have 250 programmes established by 2002 and 500 hundred by 2004, but by June 2000 only 59 programmes had their plans approved, which meant they could draw down the revenue funding and start to recruit their staff teams (Melhuish and Hall, 2007 p.14). In the 2002 CSR (HMT, 2002), there were fundamental changes to the nature of SSLPs when fewer than half of the 500 programmes were approved, let alone close to being fully operational (Eisenstadt, 2011, p.90).

What started out as the key aims for children under four years, through integrated, joined up services that were delivered in ways that met local needs and delivered outcomes for children, increasingly became the aim for *all* children (DfES, 2004a). The new framework for all children was Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004a) which included the youngest, the poorest and the most vulnerable. The 2002 and 2004 CSRs (HMT, 2002 & 2004) were moving Sure Start from a specialist, ring-fenced, cross-departmental government initiative to mainstream children's services (Lewis, 2011). We now look at these changes in more detail.

Childcare Ten-Year Strategy 2004

The National Childcare Strategy (DfES, 2004b) proposed three strands which brought together: early education for all children, childcare for working parents and integrated services for poor parents. It was a radical change in childcare provision with, "Accessible, affordable and quality childcare for children aged 0 to 14 (and to 16 for those with special educational needs or disabilities) in every neighbourhood" (DfES, 2004b**)**. The growth in childcare had been complemented by a major expansion in free early education for all four year- olds and an increasing number of three year-olds. All four year-olds were guaranteed a free early education place if their parents wanted one, and also at that time around 70% of three year-olds enjoyed a free education place (all three year-olds had access to a free place by 2004) (DfES, 2004b). (Free places for some two year-olds were piloted in 2009. The Coalition government committed to continue with this funding for two year-olds).

Table 2: The Childcare Ten-Year Strategy (HMT, 2004, p.62-3)

2005 Increase childcare element of the Working Tax Credit
Consultation of maternity pay, flexible leave and workforce issues
Revised code of practice on nursery education
Consultation on reform of regulation and inspection framework
2006 Entitlement to 12.5 hours free early years education increases from 32 to 38 weeks
£125M for quality on stream
Consultation on new quality framework for care and education, from birth to five
2007 Paid maternity leave extending to 39 weeks
First cohort of children with free entitlement from 12.5 hours to 15 hours per week
2008 Children's Centres in 2,500 communities
Half of all families to have access to school-based care for 5-11 year-olds
One third of secondary schools open from 8am to 6pm, offering extended services
New legal framework for local authorities in place
Reformed regulation and inspection system for early years and childcare in place
2010 All parents of three and four year-olds to have access to wrap-around childcare linked to early education offer, available all year round from 8am to 6pm
All parents of children aged 5-11 have access to childcare from 8am to 6pm based in their school or nearby with supervised transfer arranged
Children's Centres in 3,500 communities
Goal of 12 months paid maternity leave, with part transferable to partner.

Sure Start Children's Centres were now part of the mainstream provision for all children under school age. There were plans to roll out children's centres to 2,500 by 2008 and to 3,500 by 2010 (HMT, 2004), targets which were achieved.

The ten-year strategy for childcare (HMT, 2004) paved the way for the innovative, community-driven, areas based SSLPs to end, with the requirement that all SSLPs would become Children's Centres and part of a comprehensive service for all children and families. This was heralded as the death of Sure Start in some parts of the press. Eisenstadt, (2011, p.111-112) refers to Norman Glass's article in the Guardian which begins:

> Amid all the hullabaloo about the Ten Year Childcare Strategy, one quite momentous change that has gone relatively unnoticed: the government's much-lauded Sure Start programme has been abolished. (Glass, 2005)

Glass (2005 p.3) had two main objections to the policy direction: firstly, the expansion to 3,500 Children's Centres would mean the diluting of funding with much less funding going to the SSLP areas; and his second main concern was the loss of community control. He believed that once local authorities received this funding, not only would it be spread more thinly - as he put it, 'captured by the employability agenda' (Glass, 2005) - but they would not protect the kind of community governance with real decision-making powers for local parents that had been the hallmark of SSLP areas.

> What gave way was the autonomy of the "local" Sure Start programme and their generous funding. The programmes are to be wound up within the next two years and folded back into local government control (Glass, 2005).

The ten-year strategy signalled the end of the SSLPs as they had been up to then. Researchers (e.g. Johnson, 2011; Lewis, 2011) argue that this change was partly due to political changes and partly to emerging evidence from the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS, 2005a), which we will discuss in more detail in the next section. Lewis writes:

> The reasons for the shift to Children's Centres related in part to changes in the Government's policy agenda in respect of the service offer made by SSLPs and of services for young children more generally, and in part to evidence of programme failure offered by the National Evaluation (Lewis, 2011, p.78).

By 2008, the guidance from the DCSF (2010) stated that the management boards for Sure Start programmes would in future become advisory boards without the kind of power held by school governing bodies. Beverly Hughes, then Minister for Children, Young People and Families, expressed both regret and the inevitability of the process of this change, combined with the move to local authorities:

> I think I did discern, and I think this was regrettable, as a result of the change, that the kind of dead hand of municipals did lay itself on children's centres in some parts of the country, not everywhere, so we saw parents disappear from the governing boards (Hughes, cited in Eisenstadt, 2011, p.113-114).

Sure Start Evaluation Findings

The Sure Start programme was evaluated by the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS, 2002b). This was an independent consortium of academics and practitioners, led by Professor Melhuish at Birkbeck College and it was funded by the DCSF. The NESS evaluation of Sure Start in the initial stages had four main components: implementation evaluation, impact evaluation, local context analysis, and cost effectiveness evaluation. It aimed to collect data from more than 500 Sure Start programmes and directly from families whether or not they were involved in local programmes (NESS, 2002b).

i) First evaluation report 2005

NESS published the initial findings of the impact of Sure Start in September 2005 (NESS, 2005), following some earlier introductory reports (e.g. NESS, 2002a). The study compared a cross-section of children aged nine months and three years old, from 16,500 families in 150 Sure Start areas, plus 2,600 families in 50 control areas with similar levels of overall deprivation (NESS, 2005). The key findings showed that there was no statistically significant difference between key child development, behaviour and language indicators when comparing areas with Sure Start with non-Sure Start areas (NESS, 2005). The study did also detect some positive differences, such as an increased acceptance of a child's behaviour, less negative parenting, for example less slapping of infants. However, the study also found that three year-olds in the types of households that Sure Start was designed to support - teenage parents, lone parent families, parents out of work - had lower verbal abilities and social competencies, and greater behaviour problems, than similar three year-olds in the control areas (NESS, 2005). Thus, overall the findings were disappointing and suggested that the SSLPs were not having the impact hoped or expected (Johnson, 2011).

Some reports on the first national evaluation report (NESS, 2005) were scathing, as in the following example:

> National Sure Start evaluation team has caused shock-waves considerably beyond its own particular remit. In essence the team concluded that to date not only has

> the Sure Start programme not been a success, but for certain groups of disadvantaged families it has led to a worse outcome. (Ormerod, 2005)

According to Ormerod, the very considerable hopes that politicians and media commentators had built on this programme, had been confounded by the first formal national evaluation report, with the cost to-date of the programme at £3billion. Ormerod proposed that the failure of Sure Start to deliver any benefits to the poor, indeed causing worse outcomes for some of them, was symbolic of the increasing failure of the social democratic state. He proposed that with the distinguished team undertaking the evaluation, the much wider pool of experts which were drawn from, and the thorough and rigorous methodology, it made it difficult to challenge the findings.

Other early critics of Sure Start included Gewirtz (2001), who argued that Sure Start was a re-socialisation and re-education programme. The goal of which was the elimination of social class variances by rebuilding and changing working-class parents into middle-class ones. Gewirtz argued that excellence for the many was to be achieved, at least in part, by making the many behave like the few. Similarly, Hey and Bradford (2006) argued that Sure Start and other New Labour initiatives were state-sponsored attempts to transform the parenting behaviour of working-class parents. Another view from Ranson and Rutledge (2005), sought to highlight the development of Sure Start and such initiatives as government's anxiety over the state of the family, particularly in poorer communities. These and others saw Sure Start as being deeply intrusive and patronizing towards marginalised families and derived from a deficit model of people and communities (Coffield, 1999; Ecclestone, 2004). Furedi (2001) was critical of family interventions and professional methods of working as he saw these as self-fulfilling and used to strengthen expert and organisational powers and not to enhance the well-being of children and families. He argued that parents get blamed for a wide range of social ills with little regard shown for the poverty or the breakdown of the social support networks which impact on their lives. Some questioned if Sure Start was a form of social control in getting parents to think and act in a given way (Foucault 1977; 1988). However, there were also positive local evaluations of early Sure Start local programmes (Prowse, 2006; West and Wenham, 2003).

There was also much discussion in the national press about Labour's flagship policy failing (Lewis, 2011). There were many indications that this was not the complete picture. To start with,

Sure Start was established to improve the longer term outcomes for children and this research was undertaken at a time when many of the SSLP's were being established and it was too soon to research any potential changes in children's behaviours (Lewis, 2011). The second major weakness of this study was that it did not identify children and families who had accessed the SSLP; alternatively it contrasted families in Sure Start areas with those who lived outside Sure Start areas. The parents who participated in the research were not asked if they had ever used the SSLP services. High mobility of families in areas of deprivation was not considered with possible reduction of effects of Sure Start. Sure Start Local Programmes had a wide variety of models and approaches and needed to be researched as such, rather than within a large collective (Lewis, 2011; Prowse, 2006). Sir Michael Rutter, advisor to NESS, wrote in a personal capacity (2006) that Sure Start should have included pilot programmes and randomised control trials from the outset in order to create a robust evidence base (Lewis, 2011).

However, subsequent evaluations of Sure Start showed increasingly positive results. Barnes et al. (2007) found that between 2000/1 and 2004/5, Sure Start areas showed significant improvements compared to other areas of England: fewer children in Sure Start areas living in workless households and households in receipt of Income Support; reduced crime and disorder, especially burglary; improvements in academic achievement for children aged 11 and upwards and fewer incidents of under-three emergency hospitalisation due to ill-health. A study by Anning et al., (2007), which looked at variations within Sure Start areas, found that having more parent-focussed services in Sure Start services was positively correlated with better parenting; having improved child-focussed services in Sure Start was related to higher maternal acceptance; and having a greater proportion of health-related services in a Sure Start centre was also associated with higher maternal acceptance. These findings were corroborated by a NESS study of variations in SSLPs (NESS, 2007).

ii) Second evaluation report, 2008

The second main NESS impact report (NESS, 2008) compared three year-old children and families living in Sure Start areas with those living in similar areas but without Local Sure Start Programmes. The results of the second phase of the impact evaluation differed markedly from the first (NESS, 2005) carried out by the NESS Impact Study team:

> Whereas the earlier findings indicated that the most disadvantaged 3 year-old children and their families (i.e. teen parents and lone parents) were doing less well in SSLP areas, while somewhat more advantaged children and families benefited (i.e. non-teen parents, dual parent families, working households), the next phase of the impact evaluation provided almost no evidence of adverse effects of SSLPs (NESS, 2008, p.6).

The NESS team (NESS, 2008) found that living in a Sure Start Local Programme (SSLP) area revealed the following benefits. There was less undesirable parenting in relation to the older children in SSLP areas and improved learning conditions in the home (ibid.). The older children in SSLP areas had improved social progress, with more helpful social behaviours than children living in areas with a similar demography not having a SSLP (ibid.). These benefits to children in SSLP areas were attributed to better and more positive parenting (i.e. SSLP→Parenting→Child). There was also evidence that older children in SSLP areas were more likely to have been immunised and had fewer accidents then children living in non SSLP (ibid.). The research evidenced that there were improvements in respect of seven of the fourteen outcomes assessed.

The NESS team reported that the SSLP effects appeared generalisable across population sub-groups (i.e. workless households, teen mothers) for two reasons:

> Firstly in general there were almost no consistent differences in effects of SSLPs for particular sub-groups; and secondly there was almost no consistent evidence that children and families in the most disadvantaged SSLP areas, which had more of the most disadvantaged families, functioned more poorly than children and families in somewhat less disadvantaged SSLP areas (NESS, 2008 p.6).

There were discussions around the methodological differences in relation to the impact part of the two research studies. Members of the NESS team accepted (2008), that the research findings in the first study were underpinned by the contrasts of children and families studied by a research team with the same members as previous, and the research was undertaken at the same time in Sure Start areas and other identified for future programmes. In contrast, the later findings derived from a comparison of children and families enrolled in two studies – the Millennium Cohort Survey (MCS) and the NESS Impact Study - for which data collection was carried out two years

apart by different research teams. Johnson (2011, p. 24) argues that inclusion of the MCS data provided a 'robust comparison group'.

The NESS evaluation team (2008) acknowledged that there was no way to determine whether methodological variations could account for the differences in findings and that it seemed eminently possible that the contrasting results accurately reflected the contrasting experiences of SSLP children and families in phase two. Lewis (2011) points out the way that the NESS team attributed the improvements to the 'maturing' of SSLPs as they became Children's Centres with 'more clearly focussed services with better guidance (NESS, 2008: 30); thus evidence confirmed policy changes that had already happened (i.e. the introduction of Children's Centres), rather than evidence preceding policy as before (Lewis, 2011).

> In total, differences in the *amount* of exposure to these programmes and the *quality* of SSLPs may well account for both why the first phase of impact evaluation revealed some adverse effects associated with SSLPs for the most disadvantaged children and families, and why the second phase of evaluation revealed beneficial effects for almost all children and families living in the SSLP areas (NESS, 2008, p.7).

The evaluation team went on to caution that the benefits detected in the second phase evaluation were modest in magnitude and should not be exaggerated.

iii) Third evaluation report, 2010

Research findings from the Third National Evaluation showed that high quality services in health, education and family support in Local Sure Start Programmes did make a difference in relation to improved child health, parenting and quality of home environments than in non-Sure Start areas (NESS, 2010).

The third impact study (NESS, 2010) followed over 7,000 five year-old children and their families. These represented a 'randomly selected subset (79%) (NESS, 2010: 5) of the children who had been studied when they were nine months old for the first impact study and three years old for the second. They were matched again with children from the MCS, children of similar age and demographics, living in areas that were not SSLP areas. The findings were mainly positive in relation to SSLP areas. The effects on the children were rather disappointing, with

positive impact on health and body mass index only. Children growing up in SSLP areas were showing better health and were less likely to be overweight (NESS, 2010). The news was considerably better for mothers and family functioning. Mothers in the SSLP areas had greater life satisfaction, engaged in less harsh discipline, provided a less chaotic home environment for their children and provided a more cognitively stimulating home environment (ibid.). The two less positive impacts on mothers were: in the SSLP areas they were less likely to attend school meetings and mothers experienced more depressive symptoms (ibid.).

The study had two apparently contradictory findings: with mothers reporting greater life satisfaction and more depressive symptoms. This could be explained in part by mothers having greater access to services and more opportunities to report negative feelings (NESS, 2010). It could also indicate that mothers who were experiencing greater life satisfaction were less likely to continue in silence when they became depressed. Many mothers in Greendale were able to articulate their depressive thoughts as they now had a venue to meet up with other mothers and Sure Start team members and were able to engage and share their experiences. The consistent finding across the three year-old and five year-old data collections was better parenting in the SSLP areas (ibid.). The additional positive effect was the reduction in workless households in SSLP areas. Comparing the families from the MCS and Sure Start over the three-year study, fewer of the Sure Start families remained workless compared to the MCS families (Eisenstadt, 2011). This is important given the coalition Government's (2010-2015) renewed focus on getting those on benefits back to work, especially those living in poverty.

There were also changes nationally during this period of research. The evaluators themselves (NESS, 2010) put down the lack of positive evidence in terms of cognitive and social development to the fact that all children now had access to pre-school education, therefore differences between Sure Start and other families were less likely to be evident. The MCS children now had access to free universal three and four year-old education. Also the boundaries in SSLP areas were less defined as Children's Centres were developed, so that many children in the MCS cohort could access SSLP services (Schrader-McMillan et al., 2012). The Sure Start children may not have fallen behind from the improvements in the previous study: the non-Sure Start children had caught up. Also during this period the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004a)

agenda was implemented, with a more integrated approach to service delivery, and services were available to disadvantaged children in non-disadvantaged areas. Disappointingly, there was little media coverage of the more successful second and third impact study findings.

Personal reflections

The Sure Start approach was congruent with my own health visiting ideals of prevention and early intervention and commitment to improving outcomes for children. I worked with children and families for over twenty five years as a health visitor and for the first time in my professional career saw the systematic prioritising through Sure Start Local Programmes and funding for children and families living in poverty. This was a radical approach and very different to the previous two decades of my work as a health visitor, where there was little investment in public services in general and early years in particular and where market forces were introduced to drive change.

The disappointing first National Evaluation (NESS, 2005) and the reports in the press about the loss of local control for local programmes were disconcerting for those working in Sure Start. Initial funding had been promised for ten years and Sure Start Greendale was now four years into the programme. Becoming part of the mainstream within the local authority without initially a ring-fenced budget (the government did eventually insist on ring-fenced SSLP budgets), did not inspire confidence in SSLP directors, who lobbied government ministers for the pass porting of SSLP budgets from central government through the local authorities directly to the SSLPs. Loss of local control was a major issue for SSLPs and the NESS evaluation pushed for more control from the centre in relation to a stronger evidence base for what was delivered in the programmes (NESS, 2008). More central control was to become control through the local authorities, as opposed to more control through the Sure Start Unit, which had become the Sure Start, Early Years and Childcare Unit in the DfES. Cross-departmental responsibility for Sure Start which had been in the DfES and Department of Health (DH) in 2002 became the responsibility of the DfES and the Department of Work and Pensions (Eisenstadt, 2011, p.163-4).

The change to non-involvement of the DH was very significant to me as a researcher and trained health visitor. Initial enquiries to the Sure Start Unit as to why Health was excluded were answered with a statement that the senior civil servants in the DH did not know the change was

going to happen and when it did happen they did not argue against it. This was also confirmed in conversations with civil servants in the DH who did not appear to understand the important role health played in service provision in the ante-natal, post-natal, and early years, for children and families (as evidenced in the US Elmira project for example, Olds et al., 1997). This has been corroborated by Eisenstadt (2011, p.75). The strong research evidence in relation to the Elmira Project (Olds et al., 1997) warranted the continued involvement of the DH. The DH was not included on the Childcare Review, and Carey Oppenheim who advised Number 10 on childcare stated:

> The idea obviously of going across those two departments was that you would combine issues around employment and income with issues around education and early years' services. Why health was left out? Maybe we just felt it was too complicated, it was just another player (Oppenheim, cited in Eisenstadt, 2011 p.75).

Eisenstadt pointed out that each of the advisors had links to particular departments, but argued that this made it difficult to take the best decisions or give the best advice in relation to issues that cut across. At government level, Health was now out of the shaping of Sure Start, and Education and Work and Pensions were in the driving seat. This was an extraordinary omission as one of the four key targets for Sure Start was: Objective 2, improving health, in particular, by supporting parents in caring for their children to promote healthy development before and after birth; and health also was a significant element in two of the other objectives (Sure Start Unit 2000). The NESS Cost-Effectiveness Study (Meadows, 2006, 2007) showed that the health-led SSLPs were able to get services up and running more quickly and hence spend more of the SSLP funding in the first two years of operation than programmes run by other agencies. Although the spend per child was less in health-led programmes, they had greater outcomes for children and families. Health was a key player in relation to improving outcomes for children and families, but this was not recognised or not acted upon in relation to membership of the Review Group at government level.

During this time I discussed the progress of the Sure Start initiative with members of the NESS team and also with Sure Start early years educators. I was perplexed why Health was no longer a strategic player. Could it be an omission or were professional territories being marked out and early years was the domain of education? Would we have better outcomes generally for children

and families if Health had been a strategic player at government level from 2002? The Conservative-led Coalition government and the following Conservative government have invested in health visitors and had a planned increase in numbers of 4,200 by 2015; and some of these were part of the Family Nurse Partnerships, based on the Elmira Project, (Olds et al., 1997) that were piloted across the country, which aimed to improve outcomes for children and families where there are complex needs. This initiative is being run by the DH. At the same time the requirement to have a 0.5 WTE/FT qualified teacher in each children centre with deprivation rates in the top 30% has been removed (DoE, 2011). Professional territories are being redefined.

Sure Start was designed to engage with a range of parents, especially those that were 'hard to reach', including those in workless households with single parents and/or the long-term unemployed. Such parents were deemed potentially to need particular support 'to ensure their children's wellbeing' (NESS, 2010). The philosophy underpinning Sure Start was very much 'third way,' with parents, children and communities having access to good quality public services but there was also an expectation that parents would input positively to their children's development and also improve their own employability and eventually get a job. Eisenstadt (2002 cited in Ostrouch &Ollagnier eds. 2008)) acknowledged that children living in poverty tended to do less well at school, were more likely to be caught up in the criminal justice system in their teenage years, and were more likely to be unemployed after leaving school. Early intervention and co-ordination of a wide range of service and sustained long term support, in the eyes of the policy makers might make a difference, and help break the cycle of non-achievement for children and their parents.

Conclusions

In this chapter the development of High/Scope, Head Start, Early Head Start and Elmira projects in the USA, and their influence on the Sure Start Programme in the UK have been traced and discussed. The Sure Start Programme in the UK has been examined in detail, drawing heavily on reports and other studies at the time. The National Evaluation of Sure Start has been reviewed and critiqued. The major changes for Sure Start Local Programmes, moving from a government flagship initiative which required parent and community participation to a mainstream children and families service managed through the local authority, have been discussed, including critiques of this change.

Equipped with the knowledge of the policy development of Sure Start Local Programmes, the National Evaluations and the changing policy direction, I now explore the literature pertinent to this study. The research questions introduced in chapter 1 would suggest that issues of community, power, powerlessness, community work, social capital and communitarianism are relevant and I turn to these in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review

Introduction

Undertaking a literature review has many challenges. In the development stages of my research I was not only grappling with my research questions but also trying to identify the relevant literature material. From the onset concepts of community, power and powerlessness needed to be included. I also considered other concepts including social class, gender, poverty, community education and others which could all be relevant but realised that I had to limit the research to a manageable size and to organise my literature review around identified areas. Eventually after much deliberation themes around community, power, powerlessness, participation, community work, social capital and communitarianism were chosen as these appeared the most relevant in helping me gain a greater theoretical understanding of the Greendale estate and also to help with addressing my research questions. While undertaking this review it was apparent that the concept of community development was also very pertinent to my research and this is also discussed. Definitions of community are reviewed; early influential publications on community are discussed, with a focus on how 'community' has become a big part of social policy and many new government initiatives. I also examine how the concept of communitarianism had become embedded in the political modernisation agenda of New Labour. In particular I review the model of community (Clark, 1996) and explore the concept of community, interdependence and solidarity as a protective factor. At an early stage of my research the importance of issues around power and powerlessness became apparent as I gained a greater understanding of the Greendale estate and partnership working. I sought to examine the concept of power and powerlessness in the literature review as these concepts became central themes in this thesis in the context of Greendale as an atomistic area.

What is meant by community?

The various definitions of community include some or all of the following: society, city, village, and neighbourhood. McClenahan's (1922, p.7) pioneering work of her time classified the community according to six points of view, as: (1) a social unit in a local territory; (2) an ecological unit; (3) a legal, administrative, or political unit; (4) the equivalent of society; (5) an ideal or mental unity; and (6) a process. Although these classifications are nearly one hundred

years old they still hold relevance today. The six different points of view are broad and encompassing and flexible enough to accommodate change. The concept of 'mental unity' is still very pertinent in studying an atomistic community like Greendale. The first definition of community as a social unit in a local territory echoed my experiences of community in my formative years. I was interested in knowing how these experiences shaped me in my role as the director of Sure Start Greendale and the development of the programme. Had I tried to replicate in Greendale some of the notions around community from my own experiences in rural Ireland?

The origin of the sociological concept of 'community' (Elias, 1974) is found in the work of Tonnies' (1887/1995) notions of 'Gemeinschaft'. Tonnies contrasted 'Gemeinschaft' (community) with 'Gesellschaft' (society) and sought to provide an analysis of the development of two different forms of social bonds - one based upon similarity, and the other based on interdependence and exchange - during the process of capitalist modernisation. Tonnies yearned for a "better world which was lost" (ibid.) and saw 'Gesellschaft' as almost synonymous with capitalist society and the concept of unequal exchange. Hoggett (1997) refers to Tonnies' romanticism of the concept of community. This contrasted to the work of Durkheim (1893/1964), who in his book, The Division of Labour in Society, proposes two forms of social bonding: mechanical and organic solidarity (see Elias, 1974), which are linked to the division of labour and industrialisation, and sees these two forms of social bonding as characteristics of traditional and modern conditions within western European societies.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the power of the concept of community was evident in the tradition of Community Studies, where students studied a range of towns and villages in the UK (Hoggett, 1997). These studies borrowed heavily from social anthropology and were immensely rich in detail, but flawed according to Hoggett (1997) in that they lacked a theoretical base; he cites as an example of this the celebrated study of Bethnal Green (Young and Willmott, 1957). In my view this study gave a unique insight into how the Bethnal Green community operated and the role and position of women in providing support and access to a wide range of services through family and kinship. The focus of the study was the Bethnal Green community and positioning it within a theoretical framework would in my view have changed the nature and richness of the study.

Community studies went out of fashion in the late 1960s (Hoggett, 1997). Stacey (1969) argues that the concept of community remains tied to "the obstinate, but still mythical, remnants of the romantic model" (Stacey, 1969, p. 135) and that the two more modern meanings of community: a defined geographical area, and a sense of belonging to a group, could no longer be adequately defined by the proponents of these definitions. She proposed the use of the term "local social systems" (ibid.). Community had become an outdated concept and in the 1980s the concept of 'locality' as a geographical area was used by sociologists instead (Hoggett, 1997). Community studies were no longer available as a subject area for study at university. The two more modern meanings of community: a defined geographical area, and a sense of belonging to a group could no longer be adequately defined by the proponents of these definitions. The suggestions of using "local social system" or "locality " as proposed by (Stacey, 1969) and (Hoggett,1997) respectively in developing the Sure Start Greendale programme would not be helpful as these terms would not resonate with the parents in Greendale and these are distant concepts with little relevance or reference to people. The term "community" was now adopted by policy makers to soften the edge in relation to policies which sought to address systems and family dysfunction.

Community and social inequality

In the late 1960s there was a growing awareness of the persistence of social inequality despite the growing welfare state (Hoggett, 1997). Public policy borrowed from the experience of the American War on Poverty. The development of Education Priority Areas and the Seebohm Report (1968) on the future of social services, were both underpinned by the idea of cycles of deprivation. In all these early initiatives the idea of community was linked to assumptions concerning "system dysfunction" (Hoggett, 1997, p.11), where the problem of community was seen in terms of the dysfunctional outcome of social and economic progress or in terms of dysfunctional families and social networks.

From such references it would appear that the idea of community was, rather pejoratively, something the poor and underprivileged needed, and this remained part of the British public and social policy psyche and brought new concepts of community into the debate. In the 1970s the Home Office established Community Development Projects (CDPs) to tackle chronic forms of urban deprivation and began to query previous definitions of failing neighbourhoods by

examining and tracking the association between societal marginalisation and social discrimination. The new CDPs enabled the development of popular support from the local people and this gave rise to tensions and dispute rather than community participation (CDP Team, 1977). The 1970s also saw the development of new social movements built around gender, race, and later sexuality and gender (Hoggett, 1997). The dominant language of struggle in Britain in the 1970s remained that of social class. The struggle was seen in many city centre riots of the early 1980s. As community became a resource of resistance, the state began to develop strategies of incorporation (Cochrane, 1991), which promoted involvement of local residents, tenant management organisations could be viewed as one of these. Community participation became part of the strategy to enable administrative stability and also to subdue any troublesome elements (Stewart and Taylor, 1995).

Community as a dimension of policy

Hoggett (1997) stated that, despite the drawback of the focus now being on conflict rather than on participation and this was exacerbated by the riots, there was however a resurgent interest in the concept of community among academics, policy makers and politicians in the 1980s. This was true in Britain and also in other countries (Craig and Mayo, 1995). In the past, the prefix ‘community’ had been used to soften the edge of state interventions, implying user-friendly, accessible services or partnership agreements for the delivery of services to those in the population who had needs that were particularly difficult to meet. Consequently, when ‘community’ was used as a collective noun it tended to refer to people who were disadvantaged by poverty, oppression and prejudice. In public policy, discussions were rarely heard about middle-class communities possibly because their needs were deemed to be less of a priority. Levitas (1998) stressed that this was very obvious in relation to societal participation in poorer communities. Communitarianism promoted strong and cohesive communities as a requirement for progress, especially when dealing with complicated and troublesome problems (Henderson and Salmon, 1998).

Gilchrist (2004) claimed that by endorsing neighbourhood participation as the answer but not the cure for societal marginalisation, political administrations did not need to address the important issues of wealth redistribution and equal opportunities. She acknowledged the different aspects of the government's unease with ‘community’ including the collective or economic benefits of

social networks, the management models and how services are delivered in neighbourhoods. Strong social networks appeared to be linked with strategies of making improvements in health, raising educational attainment, advancing regeneration and reducing the levels of crime locally. Governance models which required the active participation of local residents and the engagement of local partner agencies were developed, and communities had high levels of representation and those with local knowledge were seen as experts (M. Stewart, 2000). The Home Office report, Building Civil Renewal (RCU, 2003), promoted the importance of involvement in community activities in nurturing the development of community networks. The theme of community participation, together with communitarian concepts of social duty, is found extensively in more recent urban and social policies (Chanan, 2003; Nash and Christie, 2003).

Renewed marginalisation 1980s-1990s

In the late 1980s and 1990s, there was a deepening of social inequalities and a renewed marginalisation of the excluded (Hoggett 1997), which impacted on the politics of community. A new kind of society was emerging: there was mass unemployment in Britain, a rise in low skilled poorly paid flexible working, poverty levels were increasing and there were new levels of marginalisation. Interventions by the state nearly always used the term ‘community’ as shorthand for the socially excluded. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1995) evidenced the extent of societal inequalities. Excluded communities in the inner cities, the outer suburbs, and in some rural communities did not have the resources to cope with the level of change and were “teetering on the point of collapse” (Hoggett, 1997, p.12). High profile killings such as the headmaster protecting his pupil from street drug gangs showed how excluded communities affected all of society and not just those living within them. “Perhaps the consequences of heightened social inequality are coming home to roost for the comfortable classes” (Hoggett, 1997, p.13). The concept of community had now evolved and was seen as a mixture of rights and obligations for the benefit of all, not just for excluded communities. These changes were reflected in the politics of the time with Margaret Thatcher (1987) promoting a “there is no such thing as society” culture. New Labour looked for a new source of social identity which was not class based, that was inclusive and took the party beyond the culture of personal responsibility prevalent at the time. New Labour embraced ‘community’ and it became what ‘social class’ was for old Labour (Hoggett, 1997, p.13). Tony Blair sought to unite the Labour Party around the more modern concept of community and distance New Labour from the past and the more dated

concept of social class. He was modernising the Party and the language used needed to reflect this.

Communitarianism

Sure Start was very much a New Labour initiative and was underpinned by the values and principles of communitarianism. New Labour, with Tony Blair as the leader and from 1997 as Prime Minister, sought to distance itself from what had gone before, namely Thatcherism and Thatcher's claim that there was no such thing as society, but also from ‘old Labour’ on issues such as state intervention, public ownership, equality and redistribution. New Labour's emphasis on community values and moral responsibilities was different from the moral authoritarianism and neo-liberalism that was so often identified as Thatcherism (Hall, 1988). Tony Blair sought to portray New Labour as a political ideology that was different and distinct from Thatcherism, arguing that their belief in communitarianism and 'government for the many not just the few' represented an entirely new political ideology. Tony Blair argued that 'New Labour is a party of ideas but not of outdated ideology. What counts is what works. The objectives are radical. The means will be modern' (Blair, in the Labour Party Manifesto, 1997a). By adopting communitarianism, Tony Blair and New Labour sought to show how it, 'provides a framework for policies which…aim to bring about greater social inclusion' (Driver and Martell 1998, p.167). New Labour had found a place for itself that involved rejecting Old Labour, state ownership, and redistribution and the New Right's dependence on the market. It was founded in communitarianism, in recreating 'communities, stressing duties and obligations' (Giddens, 1994). Giddens describes the policies adopted by the Blair government as ‘Third Way Politics’ (Giddens, 1998), which he described as a new relationship between the individual and the community, ‘a redefinition of rights and obligations’, (ibid., p.65).

In 1997, the Labour Party published a document stating:

> The basis of a modern civic society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty; a society where you only take out what you put in. In concrete terms, that means reforming the welfare state so that government help people to help themselves (Labour Party Policy Briefing 1997b, p.3).

This focus has been emphasised through discussions of the ‘Third Way’ (Blair, 1998; Etzioni, 2000; Giddens, 1998; Levitas, 1998). Blair claimed the ideology underpinning the ‘Third Way’ needed to be labelled if it was to become popular and accessible: ‘The ‘Third Way’ is to my mind the best label for the new politics which the progressive centre-left is forging in Britain and beyond’ (Blair 1998; cited in Fairclough, 2000, p.4). It still remains unclear as to what the “Third Way” should represent: is it a philosophy, a set of party policies or a leadership style? (Bentley; in Etzioni, 2000, p.7).

New Labour adopted community and communitarianism, and the organising concepts of: community, opportunity, responsibility, employability, and inclusion. Blair announced during the election campaign, "opportunity plus responsibility equals community". Blair said:

> At the heart of my beliefs is the idea of community. I don't just mean the local villages, towns and cities in which we live. I mean that our fulfilment as individuals lies in a decent society of others. My argument is that the renewal of community is the answer to the challenges of a changing world (Blair, quoted in Levitas, 2000, p.189).

Community was central to the ideology of New Labour. It was also central to the pursuit of radical change, which was embodied in utopian thought. The meaning of community was vague but was something to do with types of social relationship, social interaction and social solidarity. It also embodied a sense of loss (and, thus, a need for renewal). Williams (1975) argued that community is an idea which serves as a repository for values and ways of life perceived as ‘lost’. In Bloch's (1986) sense then, it is utopian because it provides an expression of 'what is missing', of that which is lacked in everyday experience. Blair (2000) saw community as active there for people when they need it:

> Lives of honesty, struggle, decency, responsibility. People who have high hopes for their children. Lives that cry out for the helping hand of an active community not the cold shoulder, the cruelty, of those who say 'you're on your own'. A community there for them when they need it, helping them cope with change, supporting their families, making sure their effort is rewarded (Blair, 2000).

Communitarianism was now embedded in British politics and was embraced with great enthusiasm by Tony Blair and Jack Straw. According to their view of communitarianism, community signified a nexus of rights and obligations embedded within robust social networks. It represented both a critique of the under-socialised and individualised self of American liberal political theory and a practical demonstration of the alternative to the fragmentation and anomie of late modernity (Walzer, 1995). It was Etzioni's (1995) form of "moral authoritarian communitarianism" which was taken up by New Labour. His definition of community includes forms of social interaction which help maintain social control, shared by Levitas:

> Communities are social webs of people who know one another as persons and have a moral voice. Communities draw on interpersonal bonds to encourage members to abide by shared values….Communities gently chastise those who violate shared moral norms and express approbation for those who abide by them (Levitas, 2000, p.90-91).

This evokes a lost age when neighbourhood ties were strong, and when families socialised their offspring more effectively; when people were considered more grateful and when there was more stress on duty and responsibilities rather than rights and entitlements (see also Hoggett, 1997). The increase and degree of social exclusion now impacted on all areas of society, not just excluded communities. A new and different approach was needed. New Labour embraced a moral and authoritarian communitarianism which stressed responsibilities alongside rights.

Community was now a major feature in public and social policy. It was synonymous with system dysfunction, dysfunctional families and social networks. As stated by Hoggett (1997 p.52), it was seen as something needed by the poor and underprivileged. Community was now part of the social policy lexicon, with care in the community, community police officers, community wardens, community mental health, and programmes like Sure Start, New Deal and others that emphasised community participation. 'Community', whatever the definition and meaning, had made a comeback.

Theoretical perspectives on community

Theoretical ideas in social sciences are now explored further to investigate the concept of community and community development. The work of Putman (2000) is considered and the nature of reciprocity and trust in relation to community is explored. This work resonates as it describes the collapse and revival of American community, in a country where I had lived for three years. Aspects of this work does transfer to Greendale and other similar communities in the UK even though there are very different social structures in the UK compared to the USA. The work of Etzioni (1995, 2000) and the concept of the "under-socialised individualised self" of the American liberal political theory are considered but this approach was not appropriate in relation to a theoretical perspective for my thesis. Cohen's (1985) study of "community" as a cultural phenomenon is also reviewed. The emphasis on boundaries and how these are symbolically defined and how people become aware of belonging to a community is not useful in exploring the concept of community in Greendale. Most parents living in Greendale do not want to be there and there is little evidence of community. I then explore the work of Clark (1996) and his model of community. His work is useful for a number of reasons. Clark asserts that community is a psychological, a sociological, as well as a culturally conditioned phenomenon. His view that community might be considered as a positive group experience is pertinent to research on how Greendale residents viewed themselves in relation to a community. "The degree to which any social system can be regarded as a community depends on the degree to which its members experience a sense of community within it" (Clark, 1996, p.46).

What are the feelings that constitute a sense of community? The work of MacIver and Page (1937/1961, p. 291-6) is also relevant here, in the context of solidarity and significance as being seen as key components of community. They described these key components of community as "we-feeling, role-feeling, and dependency-feeling". MacIver and Page (1937/1961, p.293) define 'we-feeling' as: "The feeling that leads men (women added by researcher) to identify themselves with others so when they say "we" there is no thought of distinction and when they say "ours" there is no thought of division".

The concept of the component of community as 'feelings' is also explored by others, such as Nisbet (1969) and, in the political sphere, by Havel (1990). Havel (1990 p.19) commented that:

> We must not be ashamed that we are capable of love, friendship, solidarity, sympathy and tolerance, but just the opposite….We must set these fundamental dimensions of our humanity free from their 'private exile' and accept them as the only genuine starting point of meaningful human community (Havel, 1990, p. 19).

Community is rooted in people's emotions. Kingdom (1992, p. 86) refuted Margaret Thatcher's assertion that 'There is no such thing as society' and argued: "The sense of community gains its highest justification not as a means to an end, but as an end in itself, an indispensable component of the good life which we all seek". The work of Kingdom (1992, p. 95) is especially pertinent in communities like Greendale: "A cohesive, organic community is only possible where all have the material means to participate". This is clearly seen in communities where there are long term effects of poverty and unemployment.

Clark (1996) develops these concepts further in his model of community. Clark's (1996) social systems are inter-related and form an interlocking network of human collectives. The model has seven elements which influence and shape each other. The outer four - people, environment, interaction and relationships - are representative of understandings of community which might be described as more objective, physical or measurable. The inner elements - feeling, value and beliefs - are described as the "heart of the matter" (ibid., p.47) and are more subjective and less accessible to quantifiable measurement. What binds the seven elements together and gives focus or direction to a given social system is the focal task which is "that task which the social system must perform in order to survive" (ibid., p.30). Clark (p. 42) outlines three other essential components: a sense of security, a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance, similar to MacIver and Page (1937/1961). Together with other aspects of the model, which is outlined below, these contribute to a framework for the analysis of the data in this study.

By what criteria do we judge a social system to be a community, is the question which guides Clark's exploration of the contribution each element can make to an enhanced understanding of community. He begins with people.

i) People

Defining 'community' as a loose-knit human collective has its merits. 'The community should have a voice'; a commonly heard phrase, implies the view that community is people in general. Clark asserts that privilege and oppression are rooted in social group status and social group membership is hugely influential in defining people.

ii) Environment

Clark draws on the work of the 'human ecology' movement, such as Park (1952) and Grey (1993, p. 121), in recognising that, "the very possibility of human community is related to the connectedness of human beings with the environment's nurture". The theme of the interdependence of plants and animals, and their natural habitat was applied by Clark to human beings and their physical surroundings. Clark draws on the work Handy (1994, p. 246), proposing that a sense of community is rooted not only in our social bonding but in our sense of wellbeing, grounded in the earth and all it provides.

iii) Interaction

Clark argues that the experience of oppression and the experience of community are essentially a corporate experience. A person may be oppressed but oppression cannot be understood in individual terms alone, therefore interaction between people is vital if a sense of community is to be meaningful.

iv) Relationships

The relationship element can refer to kinship or extend to wider, close interaction between individuals and groups. There is no community without people, but simply gathering people together does not confer community status on a particular collective. In other words every community is a human collective but not every human collective is a community.

v) Feelings

Clark refers to feelings as the heart of the matter. While recognising the role that the elements of people, environment, interaction and relationships have played in developing an understanding of community, Clark contends that an appreciation of the role of feeling or sentiment is central to answering the question, by what criteria do we judge a social system to be a community? Clark (1996) proposes that community defined as feelings offers us a concept dynamic enough

to match the needs of today's world. He states that: "Community as feeling is an ingredient so important in human affairs that we ignore it at our gravest peril" (p.41).

vi) Values and beliefs

The values that Clark sees as central are those of life, liberty, love and inclusivity. It is at this point that the inner segments of the social system, values and beliefs, exert most influence. The values of life, liberty and love are sought for all within one's social system and beyond. The beyond is confirmed by including the value of inclusivity, which demands that all individuals and systems are deserving of life, liberty and love. This means that in principle, none is excluded; otherwise systems become incestuous, destructive of other systems and the wider whole. Clark emphasises that when values and beliefs are being practiced, and finding expression in the relationships and interactions of the people in a particular place, then the feeling experienced is that of community. The congruency between what is believed and valued and what is actually practised is also all important. Accordingly to Clark, in this way a sense of community is an end in itself, and yet it is also a means, because the very existence of a sense of community consolidates the processes which lead to it and thus promotes more of the same (Clark, 1996, p.42).

vii) Security

Clark (1996, p.44) argues that security "involves physical dependence, since man's material needs are satisfied within it (the community), and a psychological dependence, since community is the greater "home" that sustains him, embodying all that is at least, if not all that is congenial to his life". MacIver and Page (1961, p.293) refer to this as "dependency- feeling". Goldman (1965, p.67) comments on the basic needs of the child: "Emotionally a child needs to be secure, and the roots of this need lie in the experience of love. A child therefore needs to feel he belongs, first of all, to an intimate family, then to a community which cares for him". A sense of security of this kind is born out of a sense of solidarity. Clark argues that even if the focus is physical dependence, a sense of security is not a core component of community as feeling. He gives residential homes or even schools as examples of physical or material dependence which, if enforced, can be detrimental to a sense of community.

viii) Solidarity and significance

Solidarity is, by a long way the most commonly recognised feeling associated with community. "It encompasses all those feelings which draw and hold people together - sympathy, loyalty, gratitude, trust and so on - a river into which many tributaries flow" (Clark 1996, p.43). "We need to belong – to something or someone", as Handy (1994, p.248) puts it. It is these feelings that writers refer to as a sense of fraternity, fellowship, togetherness or belonging.

"Solidarity and significance are, for us, key components of community," Clark (1996, p.43). The component of community as a sense of significance is a sentiment that MacIver and Page (1937/1961, p.293) term "role-feeling": "The sense of place or station so that each person feels he has a role to play, his own function to fulfil in the reciprocal exchanges of the social scene". Significance too is made up of a complex of related feelings such as a sense of standing, worth or achievement.

Park (1952) asserted that "The existence of society presupposes a certain amount of solidarity, consensus and common purpose". In reference explicit to significance he adds:

> In this social and moral order, the conception which each of us has of himself is limited by the conception which every other individual, in the same limited world of communication, has of himself, and of every other individual. The consequence is and this is true of any society - every individual finds himself in a struggle for status: a struggle to preserve his personal prestige, his point of view, and his self-respect. He is able to maintain them, however, only to the extent that he can gain for himself the recognition of everyone else whose estimate seems important; that is to say, the estimate of everyone else who is in his set or in his society (Park 1952, p.181).

According to Clark, the focal task is described as binding together the different elements in the social system and giving focus and direction. The original focal task of a system may change or be displaced, but by definition if it ceases to exist then the system will not survive. Thus the work of promoting community becomes what Clark (p. 45) calls the communal task: "The communal task is to create an increasingly strong sense of security, of significance and of solidarity within any given social system". To create this sense is in reality to attend to people's

fundamental needs. From a psychological perceptive Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' (Maslow, 1954; Hilgard et al.1975) is relevant here, with the more physical and material needs having to be met before others can be satisfied. The work of Schuller (2000, 2001) on learning about learning and social capital is also important. He emphasises lifelong learning and argues why social capital, shared with notions of sustainable development, is relevant to policy formation.

Community Work in Britain

I now briefly examine the history of community work in Britain over the past decades. This is pertinent to my research thesis as Sure Start Greendale has employed community workers to undertake outreach home visiting and this could be seen as a community development approach. A review of the literature suggests that community work is imprecise and unclear. There are often conflicting values and goals for community work and it is hard to find a comprehensive definition, but Taylor and Presley (1987, p.2) have provided a useful starting point. They argue that:

> Community work is not a profession like any other. It is a profession dedicated to increasing the expertise of non-professionals; to increase the capacity of people in difficult and disadvantages situations, getting more control over their collective circumstances. Community workers stimulate and support groups of people, working to improve conditions and opportunities in their own neighbourhoods. The immediate aims are often concrete - better amenities, housing, job-opportunities; the underlying aim is an increase in confidence, skill and community self-organizing power which will enable the participants to continue to use and spread their abilities long after the community worker has gone (Taylor and Presley (1987, p.2).

History of Community Work in Britain

British community work has emerged from two strands: traditional benevolent paternalism as reflected in the work of the Colonial Office, and the Settlement Movement. Collective community action includes the unemployed worker's movement, the suffragettes and the colonial struggles for independence and has been present in various guises throughout its long history (Popple, 1995, p.7).

A review of the literature suggests it is difficult to find a precise date that can be attributed to the commencement of community work in Britain. It was part of British imperialism and dates from before the nineteenth century, with evidence of community development techniques being used in former colonies (Dominelli, 1990; Halpern, 1965). Community work in Britain commenced at a later period. Major societal changes during the late nineteenth century saw increasing numbers of people living in poverty and worsening social conditions. The period was marked by the state beginning to take a permanent role in the welfare of its citizens (Thane 1989: vii). Several Victorian charities and self-help groups, including the influential and powerful Charity Organisation Society, which was established in 1869 (Popple, 1995), and the Sanitation Act 1866, from which the evolving health visiting professions developed, set the framework for future decades.

Canon Samuel Barnett, troubled by the growing levels of poverty, set about forming what became known as settlement houses, where educational and recreational opportunities were made available for local communities. Toynbee Hall, was the first settlement house in Britain, known as the 'Mother of Settlements' (Rimmer, 1980), and had as its philosophy a belief that if the poor were treated as having the same worth as the rich, class barriers would disappear and material improvement increase (Popple, 1995, p.9). Barnett wrote extensively about the poor, and also about his distrust of the cult of the professionalism, and a wish to see social work and community work less needed and eventually diminished (Popple, 1995). He also questioned whether statistical figures alone could adequately represent the lives of those living in poverty, and campaigned for a redistribution of social and economic benefits in favour of the poor, mainly through education and health (ibid.).

The settlement movement included within it the beginnings of community work. While the Colonial Office became the main channel for community work development in the colonies, the Anglican Church and the universities became the main channel in Britain. The community work innovators were upper and middle-class reformers rather than state employees or political activists. Many of them reflected the "reforming evangelical trend in the Church of England" (Parry and Parry, 1997, p. 24). The settlements sought to influence the development of responsible community leadership and address the social and health needs of the areas. Under the

influence of Barnett's wife Henrietta, settlements were established for men and women, replicating the separate university colleges for men and women. They were an example of "benevolent paternalism by socially concerned philanthropists" (Popple, 1995, p.10).

There were a number of innovations between the two world wars which contributed to developments in the community work field. In response to increasing unemployment, community centres were established on new estates offering facilities for the unemployed. The National Unemployed Worker's Movement also developed community centres. Henry Morris in 1928 developed the first Cambridgeshire village college and this innovation marked the gradual development of community schools and colleges (Ree, 1973). The development of community work between the war years was funded mainly through the state in an attempt to combat the effects of severe unemployment.

Community work in the 1990s

In the beginning of the 1990s, "the position of community development had become a little battered and activity was reduced" (Popple, 1995, p. 30). There was a cut in public funding and this stymied the developments of programmes funded through statutory agencies and some of these agencies were abolished including the Greater London Council. There were continued high levels of unemployment and high levels of poverty and a move toward community care and these changed and influenced the development of community work. Community work was being redefined (Butler, 1992). Community work was now being developed to enable the delivery of centrally planned initiatives such as community care and was less associated with traditional community services and community development approaches. The language was also changing with: community practice and community networking becoming part of the vocabulary. Capacity building was defined by Skinner (1997, p.1-2) as:

> Development work that strengthens the ability of community organisations and groups to build their structures, systems, people and skills so that they are better able to define and achieve their objectives and engage in consultation and planning, manage community projects and take part in partnerships and community enterprises. (Skinner, 1997, p.1-2).

The Conservative government with emphasis on market approaches devolved Employment Training and Youth Training from its own Manpower's Services Commission to 82 Regional Training and Enterprise Councils of England and Wales. These were headed up by people from the private sector with little input from educationalists, unions, and local authorities. This was all part of a drive to encourage employers to take on responsibility for the future training of workers. The Community Programme, which was an important source of income for community work, disappeared and in its place the government introduced a Community Action Programme intended to provide 60,000 part-time 'community work places' for those people unemployed for more than one year (Weston, 1993).

The Urban Programme, which was historically the lynchpin of the development of community work, came under threat in the 1990s (Popple, 1997). The introduction of the Poll Tax in Scotland in 1989 and England and Wales in 1990 proved to be the most unpopular tax of modern times. 17 million people demonstrated against what was seen as a major injustice (Burns, 1992). Large numbers of people refused to pay as their tax demand had increased two or three fold. Due to withheld taxes, local authorities who had budgeted for a higher expenditure than central government permitted, faced rate capping. In order to stay within budget, some local authorities reduced their services, including resources for community work (Taylor, 1992). The Conservative government changes of the 1970s and 1980s continued into the 1990s, with local authorities undergoing continued transformation to fit into a business led provider of welfare services model (Butler et al., 1992). The National Health Service and Community Care Act reflects this trend; local authorities became service enablers, with welfare functions and services contracted out with community organisations and groups alongside private care agencies competing to provide for them (Logan, 1990). This approach was promoted by the Right to avoid the expense of institutional care (ibid., p. 61) and it was perceived as natural and most appropriate with the locus of care within the family with the state only coming into play when this broke down. The shift to community care is thought by some to have redressed the balance between professionals and the public, with Taylor (1992, p.20) arguing that community development had an important role in making this work. His concern was that community work could be used to offer low-cost strategies to tackle problems that demand substantial resources.

Europe and community work

In 1989, the Council of Europe endorsed the importance of community development and community action and saw these as constructive responses to the needs of people living in communities (Chanan and Vos, 1989). The emerging view from the increasing network of community groups in Europe was that community work had a particular role to play in assisting in the reconstruction of local economies and social systems, as well as helping to create closer social and community cohesion (Baine et al., 1992; Harvey, 1992; McConnell, 1992).

Theoretical basis for community work

Popple (1997) argues that there is little evidence that community work in Britain is underpinned by a theoretical framework. A review of the literature supports this.

Community networks

Gilchrist (2004) asserts that essential substructure capabilities in civic society are provided through neighbourhood linkages which are specifically related to initiatives and developments to further democratic involvement, to promote participation, to take forward regeneration and public health programmes. She supported the then Labour government's pledge to community participation and multi-agency working and that this approach was a sincere attempt to improve public service planning and delivery. She argued that for this to happen formal and less formal networks ought to be created and developed in neighbourhoods so that those representing the .community can be supported and also held to account. She emphasises the importance of giving time and energy to creating and building effective relationships in and between the different partnership organisations with the responsibility for designing, implementing and delivering new initiatives and taking forward strategic planning.

Gilchrist (2004) sees the release of social capital for the benefit of the local neighbourhood as an outcome from positive community development. It boosts network development, and enhances community learning and shared commitment to bringing about change in the local community. She stresses that the point of community development is to preserve and replenish 'community' as a basis for the growth of many and different initiatives that are difference from both the independent and private sectors. Community development in the UK has been inclined towards a more general attitude to strengthening community capability by focusing on wider issues around

equality and social justice. Processes and principles were regarded as paramount and this is reflected through an emphasis on working *with*, rather than *for* people (Gilchrist, 2004; Rehal and Langley, 2004).

Power, powerlessness and participation

In order to gain a greater understanding of the Greendale estate and its residents, I also reviewed the literature in relation to the concepts and features of power, powerlessness and participation. I explored the three-dimensional approaches to power and sought to gain a greater understanding of the relationships and interconnectedness of these concepts.

a) The one-dimensional approach to power

In his book, 'Community Power and Political Theory', Polsby (1963) developed a one-dimensional approach: A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do. Polsby also stated that power may be studied by examining "who participates, who gains and loses, and who prevails in decision making" (p.55). The key to the definition is to focus on behaviour "the doing –the participating". Within this one-dimensional approach, because people act on a) recognised grievance, b) in an open system, c) for themselves or through leaders, then non-participation or inaction is not a political problem.

Gaventa (1980) argued that this understanding of the political behaviour of deprived groups was inadequate. Gaventa stated that, operationalised within this view, the power of A was thought to affect the action of B, but it was not considered relevant to consider why B might or might not act otherwise, were s/he not powerless relative to A. He went on to question, what was inherent in low income, education or status, or in rural or traditional cultures that itself explained quiescence? Why did welfare rights action groups spring up in some cities and not in others (e.g. civil rights movements in the USA)? His viewpoint was well made by those who put forward the two-dimensional view of power, to which I now turn.

b) Two-dimensional approach to power

Schattschneider (1960, p.71) stated that, "It is profoundly characteristic that responsibility for widespread non-participation is attributed wholly to the ignorance, indifference and shiftlessness of the people". But, he continued:

> There is a better explanation: absenteeism reflects the suppression of the options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the non-participants. It is not necessarily true that people with the greatest needs participate in politics most actively - whoever decides what the game is about also decides who gets in the game (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 71).

Schattschneider introduced the concept, that power was exerted not purely on members within the decision-making process, but also in the exclusion of certain members and issues altogether. Schattschneider (1960 p. 71) argues that political organisations, like all organisations, developed a "mobilisation of bias…..in favour of exploitation of certain kinds of conflict and the suppression of others". By this he meant that some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out, thus preventing many actors from acting. He argues that the study of politics and power must focus both on who gets what, when and how and who gets left out, and how these are interrelated. Likewise, Parenti (1970 p. 501-530) stated that one of the most important aspects of power was "not to prevail in a struggle but to predetermine the agenda of struggle- to determine whether certain questions ever reach the competition stage". Bachrach and Baratz (1970) argue that the mobilisation of bias may not only be wielded upon decision making in political arenas, but in turn is sustained primarily through "non-decisions", defined as follows:

> Non-decision-making is a means by which demands for change in the existing allocation of benefits and privileges in the community can be suffocated before they are voiced, or kept covert; or killed before they can gain access to the relevant decision-making arena; or, failing all of these things, maimed or destroyed in the decision-implementation stage of the policy process (Bachrach and Baratz, 1970, p.8).

They propose that in the non-decision-making process there maybe force used, or the menace of punishments or the use of an acknowledged bias within the political sphere such as the use of the term "troublemakers". The use of the term 'single mothers' in the UK political arena is one such example. Another possible approach they discussed was the reforming or building upon the deployment of prejudice against those who challenge, in an effort to broaden the potential for

conflict (ibid,). They state that, while these mechanisms of power involve recognisable actions which prevent concerns from entering the decision-making processes, there may be other systems of non-decision-making power which are not so easily observable.

c) Three-dimensional approach

Lukes (1974) puts forward a further concept of power that:

> A exercises power over B when A affects B in a manner contrary to B's interests. A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. (Lukes, 1974, p.24).

He goes on to argue that, "this may happen in the absence of observable conflict, which may have been successfully averted" (ibid.). Lukes also highlights that there is often "a contradiction between the interests of those exercising power and the real interests of those they exclude" (ibid.). He argues that in any analysis of power, consideration must be given to the "many ways in which potential issues are kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individuals' decisions" (ibid.). Gaventa (1980) stated that the third dimension of power was by far the least developed and understood. These mechanisms of power, "involve specifying the means through which power influences, shapes or determines the conceptions of the necessities, possibilities, and strategies of challenge in situations of latent conflict" (Gaventa, 1980, p.15). This might include the study of social myths, language and symbols, and how they are shaped or manipulated in power processes, as well as the study of communication of information, both on what is communicated and how it is done. It might involve a focus upon the means by which social legitimations are developed around the dominant, and instilled as beliefs or roles in the dominated. Lukes (1974) states that such processes may take direct observable forms through the control of information, through the mass media, and through the process of socialisation.

Gaventa (1980) states that in addition to these processes of information, control, or socialisation, there may be other more indirect means by which power alters political conceptions. These

might involve psychological adaptations to the state of being without power. The conceptions of the powerless might alter as an adaptive response to continual defeat:

> If the victories of A over B in the first dimension of power leads to non-challenge of B due to the anticipation of the reactions of A, as in the second-dimensional case, then, over time, the calculated withdrawal by B may lead to an unconscious pattern of withdrawal, which is maintained not by fear of power of A but by a sense of powerlessness within B, regardless of A's condition. A sense of powerlessness may manifest itself as extensive fatalism, self-deprecation or undue apathy about one's situation (Gaventa, 1980, p.17).

Foucault (1997) outlined another concept of power, for him power is not wielded by individuals or by classes or institutions, power is not wielded at all but it is seen as spread across elements of approaches and plans but without a particular source. Foucault proposes that themes are broadly created through power; and their activities may add to the maneuvering and working of power. He proposes that power is pervasive, and is present in all social interaction– therefore the processes of power are not retreats from the normal rule, but are incessantly present:

> Power is everywhere: not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. ... Power is not an institution, nor a structure, nor a possession. It is the name we give to a complex strategic situation in a particular society (Foucault, 1997, p.93).

Foucault (1980) states that all interactions between people encompass unequal associations of power, and similarly the most usual relationship of humanity, sexuality, is punctuated and formed through power and this is therefore not 'good'. He stipulates that neighbourhoods too are caught up with their own unequal associations of power, of gender, race, gender and sexuality. Foucault affirmed that it is best to desist from questioning the inner mechanisms of power, but to look at "where it installs itself and produces its real effects" (1980, p. 97-8). For Foucault, community's primary purpose is the way it impacts the relationships and lives of the people taking part, and the relationships they have with other people and social groups. Community may

lack palpable constituents, but it retains a gravitational pull, that produces tangible effects, at its best, social interactions of mutual care and obligation.

Freire (1972) proposes that "a sense of powerlessness may also lead to a greater susceptibility to the internalisation of the values, beliefs, or rules of the game of the powerful as a further adaptive response- i.e. as a means of escaping the subjective sense of powerlessness, if not its objective condition" (p.52). He is one of the few writers to have considered the relationship of non-participation to the non-consciousness of deprived groups. He states that "consciousness is constituted in the dialect of man's objectification and action upon the world" (ibid.). Freire proposes that in 'closed societies' where there are vastly inequitable influences, the least powerful are exceedingly reliant. Denied this process, and denied the democratic experience out of which the significant awareness grows, they develop an ethos of silence. Freire (1972, p 73) argues that, "The dependent society is by definition a silent society". The ethos of silence amongst the powerless may prevent the growth of consciousness, thus giving an air of legitimacy to the prevailing powerful.

Mueller (1974) similarly writes about groups which "cannot articulate their interests or perceive social conflict"; they accept the political reality as defined by those in power, as they themselves have been socialised into accepting definitions offered by dominant groups, classes or governments. Gaventa (1980) affirms that the developing mindfulness of the comparatively powerless, just as it first appears, may be persuadable, i.e. and is particularly susceptible to the power domain around it. He proposes that, through the appeal of fables or legends, the use of fear or idle chat, or other instruments of power, those in power may be able to guarantee that particular ideas and activities develop in one situation, while seemingly different injustices may be vented in others. Gaventa maintains that in order to maintain the interests of the dominant group only particular key issues need to remain hidden, and certain benefits remain unacknowledged and that agreement is not required for the safeguarding of prevailing interests, only a constancy that certain important key issues remain dormant and that certain benefits remain unacknowledged at particular times more than others.

In his more recent work Gaventa (2006, p.11) investigates further the issue of power and the 'power cube' in relation to the levels, spaces and the forms of power. Other forms of power, including: visible power, hidden power and invisible power are all discussed and these resonate in relation to power issues on the Greendale estate. Visible power includes the formal rules, structures, authorities, institutions and the procedures of decision making. Concealed power supports the setting of the administrative agenda where certain dominant people and organisations uphold their influence by directing who is invited to the decision-making meetings and what gets on the agenda. Miller et al. (2006) propose that concealed power, with the influence to shape the sense of what is appropriate, is probably the most sinister of these three dimensions of power. They argue that undistinguishable power influences the mental, emotional and philosophical limits of participation (ibid.).

> By influencing how individuals think about their place in the world, this level of power shapes people's beliefs, sense of self and acceptance of the status quo - including their own sense of superiority or inferiority as 'natural'. Processes of socialisation, culture and ideology perpetuate exclusion and inequality by defining what is normal, 'true' and acceptable (Miller et al., 2006, p.12).

Gaventa (2006), reflecting on power analysis, proposes that everyone is affected by and possesses power; the meanings of power and how to understand it are diverse and often contentious. He argues that some people see power as held by actors; some of these are powerful but others are relatively powerless. Others see power as "pervasive, embodied in a web of relationships and discourses which affect everyone, but which no single actor holds" (ibid., p.23-24). According to Gaventa, power is seen by some as not being a finite resource: "it can be used, shared or created by actors and their networks in many multiple ways" (ibid.p.24). Some see power as a 'negative' trait and to hold power is to exercise control over others. Others see power as being about capacity and agency to be used for positive action.

In addition, Lewin's (1943a, p. 172) classic field force theory is helpful in that: "One should view the present situation - the status quo - as being maintained by certain conditions or forces". Lewin maintains that if one could name, design and understand the power of these forces, one could not only comprehend why people, groups and bodies act as they do, but also what energies

would need to be toughened or diluted in order to bring about change. His concept of field forces helped me understand the negative forces at work on the Greendale estate in relation to power and also the concept of identifying and strengthening the positive forces that could be developed to enable change on the estate.

Reflecting on community development and community

In addressing my research question the study of Sure Start Greendale in the context of reviewing Clark's (1996) framework on community has greatly enhanced my understanding of community. The framework allows us to review the key components of community; such as people, environment, interaction, relationships, feelings, values including security, solidarity and significance. On reflection these components were useful in helping to identify the key building blocks of community but others including gender and culture could also have contributed.

From my experience of developing the Sure Start Greendale programme, community development brings people together and helps them to work together to make a difference in their community both for themselves and for wider benefit. The first phase in community development is the recognition that there are difficulties being experienced by individuals and by the nature of these difficulties others are also affected. There is the recognition that people are not alone in experiencing these difficulties. Community development can also provide the incentive to mobilise the local community members to develop joint plans to make changes that are locally required. One definition which is pertinent in my research includes:

> Community development involves changing the relationships between ordinary people and people in positions of power, so that everyone can take part in the issues that affect their lives. It starts from the principle that within any community there is a wealth of knowledge and experience which, if used in creative ways, can be channeled into collective action to achieve the communities' desired goals (Community Development Exchange) (CDX) (2008) cited in Gilchrist & Taylor (2016).

On reflection my choice of concepts such as community, although challenging and broad, gave me a basis for gaining a greater understanding of Greendale. Clark's (1996) model of community which includes the dimensions of; people, environment, interaction, relationships, feelings, values and beliefs, solidarity, significance and security were invaluable to me as an insider researcher in exploring the concept of community in the Greendale estate.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in order to understand Greendale and the Greendale residents, I needed to gain a greater understanding of the nature of community and power. Clark's (1996) reflections on community as 'feeling' and as a psychological, sociological and culturally conditioned phenomenon all appeared accessible and appropriate in studying Greendale a marginal community. Building on the work of MacIver and Page (1961, p. 291-6), who described three key component parts of community sentiment as 'we-feeling', 'role-feeling' and 'dependency feeling', Clark's model (1996, p.81) includes the importance of a sense of solidarity, significance and security, which have helped provide a structure for my research. Clark's ideas (1996, p. 81) of "learning about community through living it, and not just studying it" resonated and appeared congruent with my auto/biographical, ethnographic research methodological approach. This model also supported me as a researcher in providing a framework for the analysis of the auto/biographical interviews.

Power is a complex concept and the literature search, particularly Gaventa (1980), helped me reflect on the interconnectedness and the relationship of A to B in relation to power. It also helped me reflect on how B might behave outside the A to B relationship. The two-dimensional approach to power, by which power is exercised not just upon participants within the decision making process, but also the exclusion of certain participants and certain issues altogether, resonated with me as a director and researcher. The three-dimensional approach to power, where power is seen as specifying the means through which power influences the very wants of participants, also influenced my research. Gaventa's power analysis and 'power cube' (2006) bring a more recent and updated approach to power, whilst Lewin's (1943) force field theory is also useful in relation to change and potential forces needed for change on the Greendale estate.

In this chapter, the concepts of community work and community development in the UK have also been explored and in chapter 7 these are reflected upon in relation to the development of the community worker role in Sure Start Greendale. Linking the literature review to Greendale; residents on Greendale were sceptical and cynical about local services and also about the Sure Start Greendale programme. Empowered parents would play a major role in developing the programme. This is discussed further in chapter 6.

CHAPTER FOUR

Background

Introduction

This research took place in Greendale, a community situated near a local seaside town in the south east of England. A review of the literature found that there is no "off-the-peg" (Beatty & Fothergill 2003 p.13) definition of what constitutes a British seaside town. Research refers to seaside resorts to separate these from every town that happens to be by the sea. Ports, industrial towns by the sea and purely residential settlements are excluded. There are 43 identified seaside towns in England and Wales (ibid. p.5) and these include the local seaside town referred to in this research. This local seaside town's history as a resort dates back to the 1730s and the new passion for sea bathing and it had an early advantage with sailing vessels and later steamships and eventually trains which brought countless visitors from London to take advantage of the local sandy beaches and healthy air. This transformed the town from a small run-down fishing village to one of the first seaside resorts in the country (Walton and Browne, 2010). The holiday industry continued to grow in the 1930s-1950s and from the 1960s the arrival of the package holiday makers made holidays abroad in the sun affordable to the working classes and the unskilled. Many hotels in the local town closed their doors and opened as cheap rented accommodation, affordable also to those on state benefits and by the late 1980s the local town was frequently referred to as Costa del Dole (ibid). Changes in agriculture with increased mechanisation and less demand for seasonal farm labourers and the further decline in the local fishing industry all influenced local unemployment levels.

There is a strong arts and culture emphasis in the local regeneration programme and a focus on major investments with the Turner Contemporary Art gallery and the Dreamland amusement park. The Old Town has been regenerated with a range of artist's studios, galleries, cafés, small music venues and other arts projects. The Turner Contemporary needs these venues and businesses for its own survival and sustainability as much as these small enterprises need the offer of a major attraction to support their businesses. The Old Town redevelopment has helped give the town a sense of identity with the retention of aspects of what was cherished in the past and providing what is now attractive to local people and visitors.

Greendale is predominately a public housing estate. The estate was built in the 1970s by a property speculator. Towards the completion of the housing construction, due to financial difficulties, the estate was purchased by the district council and used to house disparate priority families on this and the adjoining district council's housing waiting lists. The Greendale area has substantial pockets of owner occupation and this predates the development of the housing estate which was built on a grassed area next to local farm land. This chapter will introduce the local district, Greendale itself and the setting up of Sure Start Greendale. I will also further explore my background and motivation for undertaking this research.

The Local District

The local district had been an island prior to the silting up of the local river during the Middle Ages, but it remains quite isolated in its corner of the county (Buck et al., 1990). The area is often represented, despite pockets of affluence, as being "on the margins' (West and Wenham, 2003). High unemployment levels have been constant and low wage, low skill jobs commonplace and it has the lowest percentage of male employees working in the county at 81.1% (Welsh & Parsons, 2006). The population of the local district consists of large numbers of people who have moved in from other areas, many of whom have been rehoused in the district. Some from east London settled here after the Second World War. Others moved to the area seeking seasonal work in tourism or farm labouring and settled in the district, mainly due to the cheap and plentiful accommodation. After the Second World War, tourism declined sharply in the district (KCC, 2004).

The manufacturing base in the district is small but this has begun to change over the course of this research. Developments in retail, the local airport (which closed in May 2014) and the new art gallery have created job opportunities, but still many "school leavers seeking skilled jobs tend to leave the area" (West and Wenham, 2003). The local district has only limited capacity to restructure itself (ibid.), although this is now changing with regeneration initiatives including the art gallery (KCC, 2004).

Buck et al., (1990) in their in depth study of the local district also chose to study the Greendale area; although this research was dated it was still pertinent to my research. It identified that

cheap labour was the only real asset, with one manager of a business with large numbers of low skilled casual employees stating that there was: “an endless supply of the type of people we want” (Buck et al., 1990). The highlighted issue is their study in relation to business was isolation, in terms of distance from British markets and from central industrial regions. There was also a more “metaphysical sense of isolation” (Buck et al., 1990) from industrial Britain: “The place has an inbuilt lethargy. It is almost falling off the globe here. There is a temptation to look out to sea” (Buck et al., 1990).

The district stands out from the rest of the county council on a whole series of social indicators, including juvenile crime, single parent families, dependence on benefits and car ownership levels (Buck, et al., 1990). Twenty four percent of children are growing up in poverty (Joint Health Needs Assessment, 2008). The district emerged as a local government entity in 1974, encompassing the local sea side towns and their hinterlands. There are areas of relative affluence but these are exceptional. The absence of large industrial employers meant an indigenous, working class, political, trade union and collectivist tradition never developed (West and Wenham, 2003). The local culture has been considered more ‘atomistic’, its economy and politics fragmented, in comparison, for example, to towns in other parts of the county (ibid.). The district has few people working in large establishments, and many are unemployed (KCC, 2004); social interaction therefore on a residential level is likely to play a more substantial role than elsewhere in the district in relation to the development and reproduction of local culture. Also there is evidence to show that politicians have found it difficult to work co-operatively to represent the local district’s interests within the county council or the wider society and there has been a problem in developing effective, co-ordinated action on regional policy and infrastructural development (Buck, et al., 1990). Progress has been made, with new housing developments, new roads, the earth works, the successful Turner Contemporary art gallery and a shopping centre (KCC, 2004). But the political uncertainty continues and in 2014 the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) targeted the district for national and district council elections.

By the 1990s, the district had the sixth highest level of unemployment in the travel to work areas (out of 322) and assisted area status (CBS, 1994). The skill base was low and there were severe

pockets of multiple social deprivation (Buck et al., 1990, KCC, 2004). It also had higher than average levels of juvenile crime and drug abuse, while there were well above average numbers of parents on income support and in receipt of benefits (Buck et al., 1990). The district has approximately 127,000 residents, with one in five of the population aged between 5 and 19, and has a 12,000 primary school cohort. Unemployment is persistently above the national and Kent averages, with a rate of 7.0% compared to a Kent rate of 2.6% and a national average rate of 3.1% (Welsh and Parsons, 2006). Recent data confirms the continuing resilience of these problems (KCC, 2014). The official labour market statistics site (NOMIS) show that of the 80,000 people of working age 4,275 were Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants in February 2014. This estimates the district unemployment rate as measured by JSA claimant count as being 5.3%. This unemployment level is the highest of all districts in the south-east region (TDC, 2014).

During the early years of this research between 2003 and 2006, the local district was ranked the 60th most 'deprived' area in the country, out of 354 local authorities, in the DLR index of Local Deprivation (District Council, 2003). It was the second most deprived area in the south east of England and the most deprived in the county and this has continued to the present day. Average weekly earnings are well below the county and the UK averages and 30% of all the households receive housing benefit and or council tax relief (TDC 2003). Levels of ill health remain high, and educational achievement levels are poor (TDC, 2002). More recent data (KCC, 2014) show that 19.7% of the population was in receipt of benefits. This compared to 9.9% in the south east region.

The Greendale Estate

This research took place in Greendale, which straddles the local wards of Southdown Park and Valley and an overview of the estate is included in chapter 1. At the time of the research, the quality of housing provision was generally good, with two and three-bedroomed houses being the norm. Most had gardens at the front and back. There were also some two and three-bedroomed flats that were upgraded during the course of this study. Most were in low blocks of three or four floors, with the exception of one high rise block with ten floors. Greendale can accommodate large numbers of young 'big' families. This, combined with the high levels of child poverty, influenced the decision to site the county council's trailblazer Sure Start on the

estate (KCC, 1999). The infrastructure was designed for an owner-occupied, car owning community and did not meet the needs of the majority of the residents. There were a few local shops where residents could purchase fresh milk and bread and a range of frozen and tinned foods. There was a betting shop, a take away fast food store, a hairdressers and a video store that closed down in 2006. There was a greengrocer's, a bakery and a post office, outside and to the north of the estate. Many residents were unhappy with the quality, the lack of variety, the cost and the general attitudes of store staff on the estate (Kesby, 2000). Residents had to travel over three miles to the local large stores situated near the new retail development. Transport was a major challenge for families with young children on the estate, who had to negotiate access to the often irregular and expensive loop bus service, with large double buggies, toddlers and shopping.

Sure Start Greendale children's centre on Valley Green was opened in September 2003. Prior to this there were no community centres, leisure facilities or educational centres on the estate or within easy reach for residents. There is no secondary school on or near the estate. Southdown GP surgery is on the perimeter of the estate, and there is a health centre some distance away. A large hospital is less than one mile from the estate. Two community associations had been set up but were not sustainable.

Firstly, there was a small Greendale community association set up by the Children's Society with funding from the county council in 1981, its purpose was to, "work with local people to encourage and develop facilities, activities and opportunities for families in the [Greendale] area of the local seaside town" (Kesby, 2000, p. 16-17). The Greendale area was chosen for this initiative because it is "a periphery estate with few facilities and many problems such as unemployment, family breakdown, child abuse and youth offending" (ibid.). The county council had identified Greendale as an area that needed resources due to the high level of need (KCC, 2000). The organisation did provide valued services, but over time with management change and a history of poor Ofsted reports they withdrew from providing the out of school services in Greendale children's centre in 2005. Staff levels reduced to three and there were discussions on the estate about the future of the project, which closed in September 2008.

Secondly, the Southdown (pseudonym) community association was set up in 1999 with support from the district council's regeneration officers. The purpose of this organisation was to provide local people with the knowledge and means with which to re-build their own area, enabling them to become a part of the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal (along with the rest of the local district) from a position of equal status in decision making and strategic planning in regard to their own affairs (Kesby, 2000, p.55). This community association closed in 2006. There are now two residents' associations on the estate.

There were high levels of teenage births at the start of the Sure Start programme in 2000, but this decreased by over 60% percent (Sure Start Greendale, 2006 and the local Primary Care Trust) during the life of the programme. Crime was also a concern for residents, with "43% of respondents being affected by crime" (Kesby, 2000). There were few cases of assault or violent crime, with the most common type of crime being property crime such as burglary, theft and vandalism. Drugs and alcohol were also seen as problems on the estate, but these were seen more as health issues rather than crime issues. The roads were perceived as unsafe as they lacked any traffic calming measures and there were no zebra crossings to enable families reach the playground or shops safely. The pavements curbs were too high and there were no ramps. There were also no benches or bus shelters where people could sit down if needed.

There were many complaints about the area, the most frequent being "the level of rubbish, broken glass, used syringes, dog mess, abandoned cars and dumped household goods that littered the area's streets, playgrounds and greens, and the alleyways" (Kesby, 2000). Mothers in particular were concerned about the dog mess, the broken glass and the used syringes as they felt unable to let their children play outside. There was also a general view that the estate looked unkempt, there were no flowers, no trees and there were weeds growing on the pavements. Speeding traffic through the estate was also a major issue and mothers felt their children were at risk if they went outside. Some residents disliked the area to the extent that they thought it should be pulled down, especially the one high rise block on the estate (Kesby, 2000).

From my fieldnotes in 2000, my first impressions of Greendale were that the general appearance of the estate was good. I had previously worked in inner London and Medway. There were many

open areas and it felt spacious. Most homes appeared maintained and in a reasonable state of repair, although many front gardens looked neglected. There was a mixture of terraced houses, low level two and three bedroomed flats, one high rise block and a wide range of owner occupied modern and more mature terraced houses. There was a large allotment area on the south of the green which Sure Start Greendale developed in partnership with local agencies. There were two large parks, one on either side of the main road to the north of the estate. One had a well-developed play area for young children. There was some graffiti in parts of the estate but it was not common. However, some parts of Greendale looked neglected: people did not appear to talk to each other, parents did not appear to talk to their children, people walked with their heads down, there was little joy. Greendale appeared depressed (fieldnotes). On a few occasions household items were dumped by the roadside or in car parks. Those could smell and appeared unsightly, despite the best efforts of the district council to keep areas cleared. On a few occasions there were burned out cars on the estate. Dog fouling on the streets was frequently mentioned; it was highlighted as a major concern at the outset of the Sure Start Greendale Programme and also identified by others (Kesby, 2000). However, this was no longer reported as a problem as the programme developed and delivered. This has been verified through my data gathering (parents and community workers' group interviews) and through conversations with residents and staff. The community association report cited:

> Its unkempt rubbish littered state, with its inadequate and unsafe play areas and lack of flowers and trees, was the biggest single cause of complaint and a general clean-up was the most frequently mentioned needed improvement (Kesby, 2000).

Further, many respondents said that part of the problem with the environment was the way in which some residents neglected their own homes and gardens. This is connected to the other point about people's anti-social behaviour and the lack of community spirit (Kesby, 2000, p. 45). Some wanted the front gardens secured with fencing so that children could play safely. The windows, doors and central heating were deemed to be unsatisfactory in rented accommodation and it was proposed that double-glazing was needed and the dry air heating system needed to be changed as it was thought to cause asthma or to make it worse (Kesby, 2000).

Early impressions of Greendale

In August 2000 I took up my post as director of the trailblazer Sure Start programme in the county, soon to become Sure Start Greendale. I spent the first two weeks on the Greendale estate talking to children and their parents. Parents talked to me in their front gardens and in their homes. Young children talked with some coaxing but generally they played with older siblings. They wanted more play things on the estate, but there was fun: I watched many water pistol fights between older children and was caught in the middle of these fights on a few occasions as I left my car. Parents were very friendly and interested in meeting me. I was struck by their openness and willingness to talk with me and disclose personal and often painful experiences in their lives. I was then a complete stranger to them.

Residents appeared resigned to the notion that things would not change and that neither the Greendale area nor the residents really mattered to those in authority (fieldnotes). However, there was a commitment from parents to get involved and to support me as the director but they did not expect any change. A group of parents agreed to meet with me to help set up the programme. They wanted better services for their children and they wanted the Greendale area to improve. I listened and listened and began to understand the challenges faced by parents on the estate. Equipped with local knowledge and regular access to parents I was able to ascertain their views on specific issues and over time I became an insider in Greendale and confident in the processes and together we moved the programme forward. Although I was not aware of the work of Freire (1985) at this time, his ideas about praxis are highly relevant to the situation at the time (see Chapters 1 and 3).

Design of Sure Start Greendale

As explained in chapter 2, Sure Start was designed to engage local parents, especially those who were seen as ‘hard to reach’, in the identification of local needs and the planning and delivery of local services which meet the needs of local children and families (KCC, 2000).

Sure Start was different. To me as director, it was new and exciting. There was a requirement for local parents to be involved at the outset of the development of the programme. A local management board needed to be established with over one third of the members being parents

from the local area (Sure Start Unit, 2000, 2002). Training was available for parents and management board members on issues of governance and accountability. There was the potential for local decision making and the emergence of a model of local empowerment within communities (West and Wenham, 2003).

When I first visited the Sure Start Unit in London in 2000, I was told that due to partnership difficulties, the Sure Start local district was the penultimate trailblazer Sure Start programme (of 60) in England to have its delivery plan agreed by the unit (KCC, 2000). During the early days of the programme, I talked to many parents, representatives from local statutory agencies and colleagues across the national programme and south east region who were also developing their trailblazer Sure Start programmes (fieldnotes). Greendale (or Sure Start local district as it was then called) appeared to stand out on a range of issues. It was the only trailblazer programme nationally that did not build on an already established substantial local project (KCC, 2000). The Sure Start Greendale Steering Group members did not see the local Neighbourhood Centre Association as a potential organisation through which the Sure Start Programme could be delivered. It proposed that the Sure Start programme should, over time incorporate as an independent organisation (Local Delivery Plan 2000). Sure Start Greendale as it became known was starting up from scratch. On reflection this helped me better understand why there was so much disagreement on what the programme was about.

One senior local authority officer from a children and families background argued that there were “serious structural problems that have created poverty” and “the sheer relentlessness of poverty that…really grinds people down” on the Greendale estate (KCC, 2000). Levels of poverty were seen to precipitate other problems in relation to parenting; for example, broadly speaking, because of low morale, there were difficulties including parents being unable to control their teenagers “right the way through to very difficult and dangerous parents in relation to child protection.....there were no services that actually addressed the needs” (KCC, 2000, p.5). The local authority officer proposed that the Sure Start Programme ought to have as its main focus, “the empowerment of children and their parents to achieve and sustain significant attachment”. This he thought, “would promote family stability and raise aspirations so that at school entry, and throughout their future life that participants have a perception that they are able

to achieve their ambitions" (KCC, 2000). However, a district council officer, working within the single regeneration programme, saw Sure Start as a programme to "complement the activities that cannot take place within the remit of these funding strands (single regeneration funding)" (ibid.). The local district council as the accountable body for the Sure Start funding planned to manage this through the already established process of a memorandum of agreement between the local district council and partner agencies (TDC, 2002).

On reflection, disagreement on whether the Sure Start programme should be seen as needing to address attachment issues or regeneration issues seemed very inappropriate. How could one child development-specific theory provide the answers for all the years of non-investment and poor services on the Greendale estate? As some early critics of Sure Start pointed out (Gewirtz, 2001; Hey and Bradford, 2006), how could a regeneration initiative deliver the outcomes that were explicit within the Sure Start programme, for example increasing breastfeeding rates at birth? It was apparent that some agencies saw Sure Start purely through the lens of their own agency and their own agencies' needs and not as a programme to meet the needs of Greendale's young children and families (fieldnotes). Tensions were running high and which agency had the power to prevail?

In Clark's (1996) model, the focal task was described as the binding together of different elements in the social system and giving focus and direction. The original focal task of a system may change or be displaced, but by definition if it ceases to exist then the system will not survive. The focal task for Sure Start Greendale and the Greendale parents was to plan and deliver services for all local children under the age of four years and their parents (KCC, 2000). This focal task did not change but the cohort of parents and children changed as children started school. The challenge for Sure Start Greendale was to establish effective services and continue to build on the successes (ibid.). Later a priority for Sure Start Greendale was to become a community mutual organisation, as this structure enabled Sure Start Greendale to access a variety of funding streams, have a membership based in the Greendale community and be commissioned to provide services for older children which was a priority for parents on the estate (HM Government, 2008, p.9; FPI, 2007; Rehal, 2009). The model gave a voice to local

parents and residents and this was essential as local authorities took control of the children centre's agenda within a statutory framework.

Leading on the setting up of Sure Start Greendale

Prior to Sure Start Greendale I had worked in a local district and had helped set up another Sure Start Programme. I was fully committed to the concept of Sure Start and managing a Sure Start programme seemed the ideal role for me. It provided the opportunities I had been waiting for throughout my professional life. I could work in a different way and empower a local community and together with parents we could bring about change that was needed and wanted. The ideals underpinning the Sure Start initiative were compatible with my own world view and commitment to narrowing the gap between rich and poor and addressing social injustice. I had no knowledge of Greendale or the local district prior to taking up my post.

I worked in Greendale as a Sure Start Director from 2000 to 2008, setting up and developing the programme. Most of the data for this research was collected during this period (See appendix 1).The concept of Sure Start as part of the Government's commitment to end child poverty by 2020 (DfES, 1998, p.3) had great appeal for me. The guidance from government was extensive and ever changing. There were a range of national and local targets. Regional officers from the Sure Start Unit visited the programme on a regular basis. There was a lot of uncertainty around funding and the pace of change. There was also the space and potential to develop services in new and innovative ways, but there was always a question around how these services could be mainstreamed and sustained (Mainstreaming Sure Start, 2004).

Sure Start was managed through a local management board arrangement, where partner agencies including the statutory and voluntary partners worked alongside parent representatives in taking overall responsibility for how the programme was managed and delivered. In Greendale 30% of membership was "drawn from Greendale's community and its champions" (KCC, 2000). There was a commitment locally to engage with the local community and the membership profile was "under review annually, with the opportunity to increase the membership by recruitment from the Greendale area" (KCC, 2000). There was a local agreement that the financial responsibility for Sure Start (Greendale) would "be invested in the Local District Council, with the Chair of the Board being held initially by the County Council Social Services Department" (KCC, 2000). The

Board would have: overall responsibility for the direction and development of the Sure Start Delivery Plan, including monitoring, evaluation, standards and public relations, with responsibility to:

> ensure management arrangements for the programme, including the contribution of each of the partner organisations, are maintained satisfactorily, and the programme delivered effectively, act as commissioners in specifying standards and outputs of service, which will be the subject of service agency agreements (KCC, 2000).

This approach was different. No one organisation had the power to decide how the Sure Start money was spent. A new model was being developed and partnership working which included local parents and community members was a requirement, which had to be evidenced in all delivery plans prior to these being agreed by the Minister for Children (Sure Start Unit, 1998, 2000; NESS, 2002a). Local statutory agencies were not directly part of this process and did not have a veto or final say; local elected members had no additional powers within this process and community organisations working in the area who had struggled for years to improve outcomes for local children had no additional powers (Sure Start Unit, 1998). Parents and community members were very much part of the process, but most did not have the knowledge or experience to understand this new model of working. Most partner agencies had little experience of working with parents, "and (Greendale) had little community involvement in the management of services, and has (had) a history of mistrust of statutory agencies" (KCC, 2000 p.3). Further challenges for Sure Start Greendale were evident in the delivery plan. The Sure Start Greendale vision included:

> Sure Start Local District (Greendale) will deliver innovative, demand led services to children and their families of the highest quality, which will be responsive to meet the needs of the community; Sure Start Local District (Greendale) will be aware of the needs of the community. This will be because the people of Greendale, as partners, will be sufficiently empowered so that they can contribute to the Programme, and ultimately will own it; Services will be delivered using the innovative interagency approach to empower children and their parents to achieve and sustain significant attachment. This will promote family stability and raising aspirations so that at school

> entry, and throughout their future lives the participants have a perception that they are able to achieve their ambitions (KCC, 2000).

Sure Start programmes received funding directly from central government via the local Accountable Body which was the district council for Sure Start Greendale. During this time other funding streams were also available to local partnerships. Due to the extensive nature of deprivation in the local district where Greendale is based, the area had received additional funding from both the European Union (objective 2) and single regeneration budget (SRB) and some of this funding was made available to the Southdown Community Association (in Greendale) for community capacity building. It was envisioned that these programmes would enhance the Sure Start Greendale programme's ability to develop services specially requested by local residents and support directly the enhanced participation of the community in the Sure Start Scheme (KCC, 2000).

It was clear from the delivery plan that the local district saw Sure Start Greendale as complementing the activities that could not take place within the remit of the SRB and Objective 2 funding streams, whereas the agreed vision for the programme had no mention of regeneration. These competing priorities brought a major challenge to partnership working during the early days of Sure Start Greendale.

The early delivery of Sure Start Greendale

There were three distinct but related strands:

Direct services: These were services that were managed directly through the Sure Start Programme and its director. The Befriending Service, the primary link between the programme and the community was the main direct service, local Delivery Plan (KCC, 2000).

***Dedicated services*:** These were services delivered by persons employed by partners and/or seconded to the Sure Start Programme. Their role was to provide universal and dedicated services to the Greendale area, strictly within the terms of the Sure Start criteria. The Director provided the day-to-day management and/or co-ordination of their activities, but the seconding agent provided the necessary professional supervision and personal development planning.

***Enhancement of core service provided within the Greendale area*:** It was recognised that services already provided within Greendale continued and these were referred to as 'core services'.

There was potential for the director to develop services in partnership with local parents using the approach set out in the delivery plan, with partner agencies agreeing to reconfigure their core service provision in a way that was compatible with Sure Start. The director was responsible to the management board and had the autonomy to deliver the programme in ways set out in the delivery plan (KCC, 2000). As previously mentioned, the potential for major misunderstanding and conflict at an operational level regarding the delivery was matched by the lack of consensus at a strategic level around the vision for the programme (KCC, 2000). Delivering Sure Start Greendale had the hallmark of a potential disaster: sited as it was within a disaffected local community with a history of two failed projects on the estate was not encouraging. My approach would focus on the delivery of quality services which would be identified and needed by parents and where parents could participate and then, working with community workers, 'sell' these services to other parents on the estate. The 'voice' of the parents would be the driver within the programme and through my leadership this would be the common focus for all partner agencies. This approach matched Glass's views and vision:

> The strength of Sure Start was that it would bring together core programmes of health (child and maternal), early education and play, and family support for the under fours. There was to be an emphasis on outreach to access difficult to reach families, and autonomy for local projects to add extra services of their choice, such as debt counselling, benefits advice and so on (Glass, 2005, p.1).

However, early in the programme I experienced the 'fractious' local politics (reported in Buck et al., 1990; see also West and Carlson, 2006), with local voluntary and community groups not being supportive in relation to accessing accommodation for team members on the estate and the development of the new role of community worker. There were times when we felt isolated, with managers from community groups telephoning to complain about our new community workers (fieldnotes). Some weeks these telephone calls appeared orchestrated. One organisation refused to lend us an electric kettle so that we could make tea for visitors to the programme (fieldnotes).

The significance of this is discussed more fully on page 179. Greendale was not a 'giving' area and aspects of local service providers' behaviour appeared very much part of the problem. I reflected on these experiences and could empathise with local children and parents who used the local services and who would experience this lack of 'giving' first hand (fieldnotes). This was also commented on by the Sure Start regional officer who attended the official launch of the programme which was held in a hired marquee on the grounds of the local school in half- term in October 2000. The school was unable to accommodate the launch. There was evidence that agencies were pursuing their own agendas and not focussed on supporting the development of Sure Start Greendale (fieldnotes, minutes of meetings). Further detail will be discussed in chapter 6.

Developing a Community Approach in Sure Start Greendale

In the early years of my role as director, I established a link between the theoretical framework of community work to the development of a community approach in Sure Start Greendale (as explained in Rehal & Langley, 2004; Rehal, 2007, 2008). I had a background in child protection and multi-agency work and was acutely aware of the cultural differences between agencies in relation to ethos, language, service planning, and delivery, and the potential conflicts these differences can bring. Certain principles were implicit within the recruitment and development of the team. These principles were formed through years of experience of working with children and young families in different communities and also through working with a wide range of partner agencies. They included:

- Respect for each other as individuals
- Willingness to listen and learn
- Friendly open attitude
- The least hierarchical system possible
- Value the contribution and views of parents and team members
- Value and ensure confidentiality regarding each family unit
- Focus on meeting the needs of families within the area
- Focus on building on strengths
- Accepting of need to change in a non-blaming culture
- Accepting of each other's frailties
- Access to supervision and support

- Grow and develop as individuals/professionals

(Rehal & Langley 2004, p. 168-71).

As director I wanted newly appointed staff to develop their roles differently from the roles they had previously held in their seconding agency and to have space to explore their new roles within a community development context. This was the absolute key to the 'new way of working'. I understood that the potential for growth and development was not a one way process geared towards the clients, but it was a joint venture where staff also had the opportunity to achieve their potential. This was noted in an external evaluation: "Staff recognised they were learning many new skills in the programme, and there was substantial evidence that training and wider staff development were taken seriously and that the whole programme was an experiment in becoming a learning organisation" (West et al., 2003).

The Sure Start Greendale team consisted of a multi-agency group of individuals employed by partner agencies and seconded into the programme, including community workers, a social worker, a wide range of health staff, education and libraries staff, careers advisor, information worker and others.

The changes to childcare policy (see chapter 2) had been anticipated at Sure Start Greendale, where a review of possible governance models for the programme was undertaken in 2002. We decided to incorporate as a Community Mutual, a new model of governance developed through the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Sure Start Greendale became the first Community Mutual Children's Centre in the country in April 2005 and started trading under the new model in April 2006 (Kent County Council, 2005). The model was incorporated in the Labour Party election manifesto for 2010, embraced by the new coalition government in 2010 and was seen as playing a major role in developing the concept of the 'Big Society'.

Evaluations of Sure Start Greendale

To begin to understand the effectiveness of the programme after the first few years of operation, in 2003 I commissioned an evaluation from a consultant facilitator specialising in applying a psychoanalytic approach to team working. I felt that it was important somehow to 'capture' what was happening among the team, to enable what had previously been unspoken and

unconceptualised to be discussed and given a framework to inform both current and future practice. The independent facilitator conducted a team workshop which attempted to analyse just what it was that gave the project its particular 'flavour'.

This was a very exciting meeting; collectively, there was a sense that a new model of working was being developed and embraced (Rehal & Langley, 2004). In the meeting, team members said that they felt that above all, they worked from a 'with' rather than a 'for' perspective. This meant that they worked alongside families not as professionals who were outside the difficulties facing families, but as people who could share and recognise the pressures and problems the parents were experiencing (ibid.). This was perhaps the most significant aspect of the Sure Start Greendale working practice which was identified by the evaluation, allowing a relationship between parent and professional to develop, which resulted in a joining of creative resources (ibid.).

Many benefits to families were described by the Sure Start Greendale team members as part of the external evaluation workshop:

- We did not take over.
- We aimed to give clients confidence in what they could achieve.
- We gave choice within a realistic framework.
- We valued difference.
- We valued a real liking for clients and an empathy with their difficulties.
- We aimed to try and see each family as belonging to a system thus matching our work to the needs of that specific family in its context.
- We try to avoid fitting clients into a rigid set of rules, allowing instead for a creative and developmental approach rather than an inflexible and standardized approach
  (Rehal & Langley, 2004, p.168-71).

Team members recognised that flexibility and autonomy in working practice needed to be based in a firm framework of team working, good leadership and supervision. This both challenged and critiqued the way many had worked in other agencies previous to joining Sure Start Greendale; the team were aiming to work within a framework in which they could tolerate 'not knowing'

and many of the team felt this approach daunting at the beginning because it was so different from previous work and practices (Rehal & Langley, 2004).

One of the most striking aspects of the Sure Start Greendale's approach identified by the evaluator, seemed to lie in the emphasis that staff placed on their relationship with parents and the transforming potential of this. This finding was very important to me as the director and also as a researcher as this is what I had set out to achieve and an independent evaluator was now stating that it had been achieved. The facilitator was struck by some of the similarities between what staff identified as their role and purpose in their working practice, and what psychotherapists such as Bowlby (1969), Winnicott (1971) and others have identified as the potential of the therapeutic process. In this respect, above all, the project was adopting, perhaps without realising it, a way of working which much current psychoanalytic theory regards as having the greatest potential on a person's ability to change (Rehal & Langley, 2004). This was also borne out by findings from the ongoing external evaluation (required by Sure Start nationally) which was taking place at the same time (West et al., 2001, 2003). In this it was noted that "staff came to represent, however unconsciously, important figures – good enough parent type figures in some cases – who came alongside particular people and their children without disabling judgementalism" (West et al., 2003; see also Carlson & West, 2005).

The evaluators observed that many of the parents with whom Sure Start Greendale worked had been damaged by the various failures in their childhood experience of love and security (West & Wenham, 2003). Accordingly, the deep wounds caused by early deprivations, traumatic events, the failure of caregivers to provide a 'good enough' relationship in which a sense of self-worth and secure attachments could develop, frequently had lasting and devastating effects (ibid; see also West & Carlson, 2006). In short, many of the families which, made up the Sure Start Greendale catchment group had suffered from the failure to grow up with a 'secure enough base' to help them cope with growing and developing into healthy, fulfilled adults and successful parents (ibid.).

In the commissioned evaluation, the team talked about not working from a 'problem-orientated' perspective but responding, encouraging and acting as 'good' parents to many of the families

(Rehal & Langley, 2004). This was borne out by comments made by parents, cited in the external evaluation report:

> 'Community workers are an important part of Sure Start Greendale, they are the right sort of people, and they must have been handpicked for the job. They have made a big difference to my life; I couldn't have got through the year without her' (West et al., 2003).

The success of the project at this stage, as reported in both the commissioned workshop and external evaluation, may have to do with the extent to which parents and staff were able to use the space provided to create new patterns of relationships, which enabled parents and staff members to learn and change (West & Carlson, 2006).

In undertaking my research I sought to gain a greater understanding of power and powerlessness issues on the Greendale estate. I wanted parents, community workers and partner agency representatives to have an opportunity to tell their stories and have a voice (Letherby, 2003). I wanted to ensure that the Sure Start Greendale programme was described and aspects recorded in print for future generations. I hoped that this research might influence the commissioning and development of other community projects. Looking back and with hindsight, I also wanted this model of working, where organisations worked 'with' (Rehal & Langley, 2004), rather than just delivered services 'to' communities, to be part of mainstream public service thinking. In undertaking this research I wanted to increase my level of understanding of issues around parent and community worker participation, of the programme called Sure Start and of the Greendale estate. I wanted to explore theoretic issues of power and powerlessness and to gain a greater understand of my experiences as a director and researcher. I wanted to more fully understand the concept of community and how people in Greendale felt about their local area and what a programme called Sure Start could do to enhance or otherwise local parents perceptions. I wanted to add to the body of knowledge on parent and community participation and how early intervention might make a difference to the lives of children and families.

Outreach community worker visits

The model of community outreach was seen by Joan as vital in Greendale and as a model of best practice. A model without outreach was in her view doomed to failure. Employing local people to undertake the role of community worker which included outreach home visits was unique to the programme and was highlighted in evaluation reports (West et al., 2001). Joan also had a deep understanding of how difficult it is for some families to reach out and access services by themselves and how important outreach services that "going to them" are in building confidence so that families can engage. Adele in chapter 8 highlighted the importance of outreach services and being able to talk with somebody who was friendly, easy going and non- judgemental. She was, over time, able to access services at the Sure Start centre. Her self- confidence increased and she progressed to taking on additional roles within the programme. Liz in chapter 7 emphasises the vital role the Sure Start programme played in building social support and social networks and without Sure Start "the social networking for support would struggle".

The National Evaluation of Sure Start (2006, p. 33-34) documents the importance of outreach visits and 'We follow the parents' lead'. The outreach home visits were not just about getting families out of their home to use services but it was an opportunity to talk with families and identify which services might be the most beneficial for them:

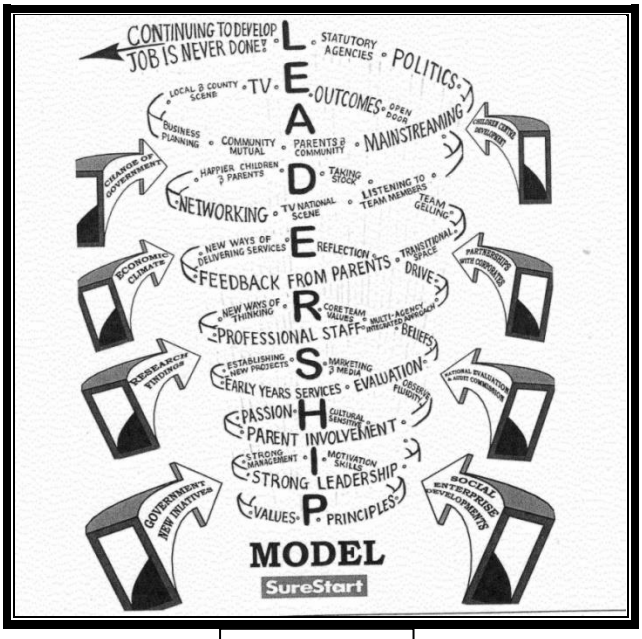
> It's about reaching the hard-to-reach families, those that are less confident who don't come to the centre and who may not be able to read. Working with families in the home allows us to pick up things that wouldn't normally be identified and issues can be dealt with in a safe place
> (Outreach worker, p. 33).

Outreach home visits give an insight to families and their environment that is not available when families are seen in other settings. It enables less confident parents the opportunity to access services that otherwise would not be open to them. For many families, home visits start the process of building confidence and over time building social networks of support. In Greendale and in similar estates the importance of including outreach community worker home visits when planning the development and delivery of services should always be highlighted within an

evidence based approach. The community worker outreach visits need to be costed and included in service planning.

What then are the implications for service providers in areas like Greendale who do not have a Sure Start programme? If where you live and the circumstances surrounding you are as important in terms of life chances especially for children what else do policy makers and service providers need to include in their service planning and delivery in order to improve outcomes for children? A focus on a particular issue such as child protection or a specific health intervention such as immunisations would not address the major issue of social isolation and lack of social capital for many families living in Greendale. The role of the community workers in this research highlights the important part they play in providing a proactive outreach service to all parents especially mothers experiencing social isolation and then encouraging and if needed accompanying them to services at the Sure Start centre. If services are developed to meet local need should the role of the community worker be an integral part of policy making and implementation in communities such as Greendale? Should the local council prioritise areas like Greendale for playgrounds for children and families so that parents can meet and begin to develop networks of support? Do professionals need training on the concept and importance of social capital especially when delivering services to young children and families?

A new model of working



Rehal, 2007

The early experiences in Greendale prompted a whole new approach to the planning and delivering of services in the estate. A leadership model (Rehal, 2007, p.10), was developed that brought together the values and principles of Sure Start children centres and a different ideological approach that responded to the identified needs of the Greendale estate. The more traditional hierarchical approach to power and decision making was replaced by a more collaborative inclusive approach where parents, children, community workers, professional staff members and partner agency staff were all engaged in a process of change and development. "This was based on an understanding of change as a dynamic and organic process and how people learn and change" (ibid., p.11). Change in estates like Greendale does not just happen. It requires a different sustained and energetic approach which drives forward the programme by addressing need and by integrating into the community in which it operates. The energy and momentum created with this approach is sustained through a commitment to enable Greendale, a very needy community to grow and flourish. In this approach as people grow and develop so the programme itself must change alongside the changing community in which it is rooted. The values that underpin the Sure Start Greendale children's centre are the core for the model. They are shared by all staff; volunteers and parents involved and percolate through all aspects of the programme, including recruitment, team meetings, supervision, training and team management. The model needed inbuilt flexibility to accommodate the cultural differences between the many different agency staff seconded into the programme. To minimise and manage potential conflict within the team certain principles were adopted and these are highlighted in full in chapter 5. Through this approach natural leaders began to emerge among professional staff, community workers, volunteers and parents. There is clear evidence of this in the data in relation to Liz and Adele and to a lesser extent Sue. This approach created energy which fuelled the upward thrust of the model of integrated leadership. This energy and sense of movement enables the programme to take on other issues as needed such as a different approach to a specific issue, team gelling, and adopting best practices from one aspect of the programme to another. In this approach individuals and the team remained open to new ideas and new developments. Change and the willingness of staff to remain open to change was critical as change was the only constant. Continuous growth and development could only be achieved if change was understood as an integral part of the model. The importance of individual and group supervision were emphasised and part of the model. This was to ensure that staff were supported and burn out was

prevented. The model operated in ways that made sense to the local parents and the Greendale community.

On reflection this leadership model was developed when there was investment and political will to bring about change for the poorest communities in the country. It helped bring about positive change in Greendale. The climate has now changed and this model would have difficulties getting established during this time of austerity and major cuts to public service provision. The need for shared budgets, shared values and a commitment to integrated working are all essential to bringing about change but these will struggle in relation to priorities as agencies struggle to manage with drastically reduced budgets and reduced staff teams. Greendale children's centre has had to cope with budget cuts but by being a community mutual partnership limited has been protected from the constant restructuring and job losses that have prevailed in the local authority and the NHS. Volunteers and parents have also stepped in to support the programme.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Greendale and the local district were introduced. I shared my first impressions of the Greendale estate and described the early days of the Sure Start Greendale programme and some details of initial evaluations. The first phase of the programme demonstrated both the challenges and early successes of this new approach to working with parents and agencies. Early findings from a commissioned workshop and external evaluations of the programme were positive. A new model of working was developed in Greendale and this has been discussed in some detail together with the changes and the threat to the model within the reduced funding to Sure Start Children's Centre and the austerity agenda. I also explore aspects of my own leadership in undertaking this research.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methods and Methodology

"The need to see experience and life as a fluctual praxis, always in flow and ever messy"
(Plummer, 2001)

Overview and organisation of the chapter

In this chapter, the research methods and methodologies are introduced together with the rationale. I outline the research questions and explore my own values and principles, giving due consideration to trustworthiness, privacy, informed consent, ethical and confidentiality issues. A discussion of the reflexive methodologies follows, including auto/biographical narratives, ethnographic research and aspects of action research. The specific life stories are then introduced. Finally, the importance of language is considered in telling the Greendale story and methods of data analysis introduced.

Background, rationale and context for the research

I was concerned with developing a critical understanding of the concepts of community and power, using a qualitative methodology, including auto/biographical research approaches. I drew on my learning biography and used this to interrogate my own and participants' assumptions about community and power. The research approach provided a link between the theoretical concepts being studied and the reality of lived experiences on the Greendale estate.

The research provided a space to illuminate participants' perceptions of Greendale. It also enabled participants to share how they had been supported or not by the programme and provided the opportunity to track parents' development within the programme, noting how their perceptions changed over time, in light of specific interventions and relationships with professionals as well as participation in the Sure Start programme.

Research Questions

I have restated the research questions here as this helped me focus and reflect on the questions in the context of developing my research methodologies. Which research methods would help me gain a greater understanding of issues of community, empowerment and power so that I could address the following:

1. What perceptions do community workers, parents and other stakeholders have of the Greendale estate and how might these have changed over time in the context of the Sure Start programme?
2. What are the factors that shape stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of community in Greendale?
3. How might someone such as the director, who is part of the Sure Start co-construction, shape some of the processes for better or for worse, and how can this be understood, critically and reflexively, using an auto/biographical framework?
These lead hopefully to some answers to the wider question:
4. Can our understanding of community be enhanced by investigating a Sure Start intervention?

Formation of my values and principles

Kent (2000, p. 81-7) posed the question: What kind of researcher are you? Would you tend to be a deontologist, giving individuals' rights the higher priority? Or are you a consequentialist, valuing the greater good over the individual? I applied these two overarching questions about ethical philosophy to my dilemma and recognised that in this situation I was a consequentialist, I valued a whole systems approach to improving outcomes for young children and valued:

- the concept of Sure Start,
- the opportunities it provided for children and families living in poverty,
- new ways of integrated working,
- the learning and the growth opportunities for myself, for my team and for parents,
- working openly with parents and staff,
- innovation and change in practice, underpinned by research and evaluation,
- quality service provision,
- my interest in politics and how social policy was developed at national and local level,
- my own leadership skills.

Sure Start was about improving outcomes for children and their parents through an integral process of developing and delivering services with parents and the community (DfES, 2000). For me it was an organic, holistic process which enabled growth and development for parents, children, staff members and for myself as director of the programme.

I reviewed the research concepts and principles set out by Whalley et al. (2004) and reflected on the 'non-maleficence' aspect, posing myself the question: Could I cause harm to Sure Start Greendale and could this research project impact negatively on the programme? Reflecting on the ethics of my own leadership within the four principles of justice, autonomy, beneficence and non-maleficence (Whalley et al., 2004), there were two driving principles that I had sought to base my leadership on: justice and autonomy, these have been referred to in chapter 1. Kent's (2000) four rules of research were then reviewed and I reflected on each one in the context of my planned research. Privacy of parent participants and their right to decline participation in this research project were important. The other rules of fidelity, confidentiality and veracity were all congruent with my own values base.

Stevenson (1998) asserts that some of the most influential guidelines for ethical behaviour were set down by the Chinese philosopher, Confucius, around 500 BC. In fact, Confucius' philosophy was centred on the idea of acting right. Stevenson maintains that Kant and the idealists were concerned with treating others "as you would want to be treated" (ibid, p.31) and explains that Thrasymachus believed that "those who are stronger than everybody else decide what they want 'justice' to be in accord with their own preferences" (ibid, p.40). This posed many challenges and questions including:

- How could I evidence that I was 'acting right' as a researcher, while also working within the programme as director, and central to the research project?
- How could I 'minimise me' as a 'powerful' director working within the programme during those periods of time when I was doing the research?
- How might I use my position and relationships reflexively with a range of people to create a good transitional space, in which we could think about the meaning and importance of the programme as lived experiences for parents and staff living and working in Greendale?

Following much discussion and critical reflection with supervisors and colleagues, I went on to articulate issues relevant to this research approach. These questions (above) helped me explore the importance of values and principles and gave deeper resonance to my dilemmas. As director I was central to the programme, and as researcher within the programme my 'self' and 'self and others' were central to this research thesis. Unlike other research methodologies, I did not seek to

distance myself from the research participants, but I utilised the opportunity to use my knowledge and experience within a highly reflexive approach to interrogate notions of community, power and powerlessness, the Sure Start programme and the Greendale area. This approach not only helped me reflect on my directorship but also on my researcher role and helped me to think how my knowledge and experience could support me in the programme and the research. These issues are addressed in more detail in chapter 6.

Rationale for chosen research methodology

I felt it was essential that there was a match between what I was studying (participants' perceptions of Sure Start Greendale) and how I was studying it (the research methods used). Therefore, in order for the methodology to be a suitable instrument for the research, the approach needed to be based on a similar philosophy to that it was studying. As Holliday (2002, p. 10) writes, "Approaching the research setting appropriately involves interaction between the culture of the setting and the culture of the research".

I chose a qualitative interpretive approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Holliday, 2002); this seemed the most appropriate in light of addressing the research questions, because it focuses on understanding the way that people interpret and make sense of experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It seemed appropriate to use a broadly interpretive approach which facilitates the understanding of such questions of how and why. This approach gave me space for a more comprehensive understanding of social processes that my initial impressions and past experiences suggested was essential and allowed for consideration of contextual complexity as well as enabling culturally and historically situated interpretations. A quantitative, experimental approach would not have been useful in exploring the complex concepts of community, power and powerlessness. Qualitative research allows the researcher to see and understand the context within which the research actions and decisions take place and to be alive to changes that are occurring (Holliday, 2002). Often in these research settings human decisions and actions can only be understood in context - it is the context that helps to explain why somebody or groups of people act as they have (ibid.). This research methodology allowed me to explore topics in more depth, but did not attempt to quantify how many parents on Greendale felt one way or the other about the Sure Start programme.

The approach offered flexibility as far as location and timing were concerned and I did not have to have large numbers of participants. Using this methodology I could undertake this research while being the Sure Start Greendale director, as I had ready access to the programme, its participants and the Greendale area. This approach would be least disruptive to parents, staff and children and I was able to study aspects of the programme which would hopefully help me do a better job as director. The venue, the Greendale estate, where the research took place, was an 'everyday' setting (Gilliam and Zigler, 2000); in other words, parents, community workers, other staff and the researcher were in their natural surroundings. This approach helped me to define and boundary (the Greendale estate) my research study and enabled me to draw on other interrelated approaches; it located the study on the Greendale estate, helped me define what I was studying and also helped in constructing a narrative approach to the research.

I needed to consider which other research strategies within the overall interpretative framework to choose from. It was important that whatever I chose allowed me to interrogate parents and community workers' perceptions of Sure Start Greendale and acknowledged my own role in constructing the methodological approaches. "Social sciences are concerned with humans and their relations with themselves and their environment, and as such, the social sciences are founded on the study of experience" (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998, p. 153). Experience is, therefore, the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry. My eight years' experience of working in Greendale were key to my research and research approach.

Auto/biographical and narrative approaches

An auto/biographical methodology was my principal research approach. This enabled a more in depth understanding of the experiences, not only of the parents, community workers and multi-agency representatives from Sure Start Greendale, who participated in the research but it also enabled me as a researcher and director to gain a greater understanding of my role and influences within the research approach and the programme in general. This approach was open and fluid and able to respond to any changes within the programme. This methodology was compatible with Sure Start Greendale. I was also able to use my own life experience to help me more fully understand others, just as their lives helped me better understand my own roles.

> Memories of being a pupil with a stammer sent to stand in the corner of the classroom because I could not recite poetry at times resonated when working with parents. I felt powerless in that situation in relation to the headmaster. Could parents feel the same about me as the director? I was ever mindful of the power differential and sought to minimise it.

My awareness of this methodology was influenced by the feminist sociologist Stanley (1992). She claims that auto/biography moves the awareness to the inter-relationship between the building of one's own life through autobiography and the building of a life of another through biography. The consequence is that we cannot create narratives about ourselves without mentioning and helping to create others' lives and selves. Equally, the productions we create of others in drafting their life stories include and reveal our own history, and also the cultural and social location. Stanley (1992) affirms that many of the regular differences that are crafted between biography and autobiography are false. To address this she etches out the word 'auto/biography', a term which negates any easy differentiation between biography and autobiography, instead acknowledging their interdependence.

> My nurse and health visiting experiences, my understanding of the concept of interdependence and the importance of self-sufficiency, my natural affinity and empathy towards the 'underdog' were all part of my autobiography and these experiences influenced the building and narrating of the life stories or the biographies of the research participants.

My research approach could also be viewed as narrative (Clandinin and Connelly, 1998), as I tell the story of parents and staff in the Sure Start Greendale programme and also the story of my development as director and researcher and the on-going communications which I had regarding myself and others. Biographical and auto/biographical methodologies are becoming more commonly used in educational and social research, as part of what has been called a 'subjective turn', in which people are viewed as principled negotiators, actively creating their life worlds and

making meaning within them (Chamberlayne, et al., 2000, 2004; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). This tradition reaches back to the work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1958) and the Chicago School and also more recently to feminist research (Stanley and Wise, 1983), and has been identified as the construction of 'human documents': accounts of individuals' experiences which reveal the individuals' actions as a human agent and participant in social life (Blumer, 1979, p.29). I have drawn on the work of Gilligan, (1982) and feminist psychology which is "rooted in the complexities of narratives, stories and an attentive listening to the voices of connection and care; in contrast with more abstract theories of human development" (Plummer, 2001, p.7).

Life histories, literary biographies and oral histories all bring life stories into being that would not otherwise have been constructed in this way in everyday life. The role of the researcher is crucial to this activity: without them there would be no narrated life story. The resulting narrative is very much a co-construction. Through my research and chosen methodology, the voices of Greendale participants were heard, they had an opportunity to bring their life stories into being. Plummer (2001) writes in support of the life story approach:

> My conception of the human subjects and their experiences is one that cannot divorce them from the social, collective, cultural, historical moment. But in the face of the inherent society-individual dualism of sociology, I argue that there must surely always remain a strand of work that highlights the active human subject (Plummer, 2001, p. 7).

Data from narrative, life history and auto/biography methodologies are a "re-presentation, that is, a retelling, since the life to which it supposedly refers is already a kind of narrative construct. Life is always, necessarily, a tale" (Molloy, 1991, p. 5) and they are all open to different interpretations. Data materials generated from these types of methodologies can be extensive and difficult to analyse. Research findings from these approaches are not easily transferable to other settings and generalisations cannot be readily made. However these methodologies can increase our level of understanding of particular communities and of specific individual's lives which can inform services commissioning and delivery. In auto/biographical research, the story and life history of the researcher is also part of the research and interpretative process and this could be seen by non-researchers as a weakness. West (1996, 2002) states that as research

academics we are part of the process of sense-making, which takes account of issues of power as well as subconscious developments in which people can report back to us what they think we as researchers might want to hear, reflecting exchanges with other 'authority' figures. Letherby et al. (2012, p.87) state that "not only does who we are affect what we do, but what we do affects who we are and of course the process of research affects the research product(s)". Potential participants in auto/biographical research need to have the confidence, the time and the childcare support if needed in order to be able to participate, and some mothers on the Greendale estate would find it hard to take on this level of involvement.

Ethnographic dimension

Ethnography is the systematic study of people and cultures (Geertz, 1993), using in-depth participant observation, usually over a long period. Drawn originally from anthropology, it became well known in sociology in such classic studies as Whyte's (1953/1993) 'Street Corner Society'. As I had been the director of Sure Start Greendale for eight years, this research could be viewed in part as an ethnographic study, where the researcher was immersed in the research setting for an extended period (Holliday, 2002). As researcher, I was concerned "to describe and interpret cultural behaviour" (Schwandt, 2001, p.80). My approach to ethnography emphasised the importance of myself as the researcher, directly experiencing situations as well as engaging collaborators in interpreting these with me; as the researcher I was "the primary tool for collecting data" (Schensul and LeCompte, 1999, p.xiv). "The ethnographer's principal database is amassed in the course of human interaction: direct observation, face to face interviewing and elicitation; audio-visual recording; and mapping the networks, times and places in which human interaction occurs" (ibid). Therefore the personal characteristics and activities of researchers as human beings and as scientists become salient in ways that are not applicable in other types of research, where the investigator can maintain more distance from the people and phenomena under study. My role as researcher was somewhat unique, as I was the only Sure Start Director undertaking ethnographic research, and I sought to represent aspects of the views of the parents, community workers and other participants, while writing for an audience that was, for the most part, composed of those outside the Greendale community.

During the research I moved from the field (programme setting) as a data collector to developing textual representation of the data, and engaged in the process of re-presentation of the Sure Start Greendale story. “Writing is social. It is reflexive, audience attentive, and negotiated” (Grills, 1998, p.199). In the process of re-presentation, I “describe and interpret cultural behaviour” (Schwandt, 2001 p.80). This approach enabled a deeper and more profound understanding of Greendale and I have reflected this in the research thesis.

Action research elements

There were also some action research elements in my research. “Action researchers are intent on describing, interpreting and explaining events (enquiry) while they seek to change them (action) for the better (purpose)” (McNiff et al., 1996, p.13). All research is enquiry for some purpose: the purpose is usually the advancement of knowledge, but the main purpose of action research is to bring about improvement in practice (ibid.). I perceive action research to be a concern for the wellbeing and interest of people and an all-inclusive form of applied hands-on research that attempts to make qualitative research more pertinent to the lives of the people who are the main participants in the research. This research takes place through the recurrent processes that swing between action and serious consideration. Each cycle notionally follows the pattern of “identification of issues, imagination of solution, implementation of solution, gathering of evidence, evaluation of solution, modification of practice”, although, in reality nothing is ever quite as neat as this (McNiff et al.1996, p.107).

“Improvement and involvement are inherent in the action research process” (McNiff, et al. 1996, p.107) and I believed that one aim of my research was to be of use to those involved: by creating an opportunity for parents on Greendale to have a voice, by making available my research findings and by feeding information into the planning and decision making processes. These are aspects of action research, in that trends that emerged from the data informed and shaped how I chose to proceed, which in turn influenced how the programme evolved. My research therefore had a developmental approach.

Kurt Lewin (1946) who is credited as the founder of action research saw action research as the research methodology needed for social practice. Action research focusses on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. His approach

involves a spiral of steps, 'each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action' (ibid.: 206). The basic cycle involves the following: identify a general or initial idea-reconnaissance or fact finding-planning-take first action step-evaluate-amend plan-take second action. According to Lewin research that "produces nothing but books will not suffice" (Lewin 1946, reproduced in Lewin 1948: 202-3).

I was also influenced by the work of Conquergood (2002, p.145), "to recognise the power of the in-between". He proposed that researchers should make work (drama) that "struggles to open the space between analysis and action and to pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice" (ibid.). My position as both director and researcher was a privileged and powerful one. On reflection, the "power of the in-between" resonated with me. I was in a position to hear what the research participants were telling in their life stories; I could empathise but also challenge. My in-depth knowledge of the Greendale area and the Sure Start Greendale programme also strengthened my position in relation to the "power of the in- between". I enabled the voices of parents, community workers and community activists from Greendale to be heard. Due to the limitation of research participant numbers I was also conscious that some parents may not have been able to have their voice heard. The voice that I adopted influenced what was emphasised within the Greendale setting, who was heard from the community, and correspondently what themes were silenced or neglected.

Why not autoethnography?

A review of the literature on research methods initially drew me to autoethnography. The emphasis of the researcher on the use of 'self' as a starting point for data gathering and enquiry seemed a possible way forward for my research study. In this, the researcher's personal account is used to probe a broader social issue (Cole & Knowles, 2001), where the experiences of the researcher are presented as accounts of the self that seek to encompass a knowledge of the issues raised (Sparkes, 2000). In this approach the researcher's knowledge and understanding is used to focus on the 'self' while continuing to be concerned about the wider questions in which the research takes place. The terminology used to describe autoethnography varies, but the key feature of the research is the researcher and their own experience and knowledge of the subject area.

Notable examples of autoethnographical research studies include (Ellis & Bochner, 1992) where Ellis used personal experience of an abortion and the death of her husband (Ellis, 1995) to illustrate her vulnerable self. This was not an appropriate approach to researching Sure Start, the Greendale estate or the experiences of parents, community workers and agency representatives. These were the key areas to research and, although there were important personal dimensions in this study, to emphasise my experiences to the degree required in autoethnography would deflect attention from Sure Start, Greendale, parents and partner agency representatives, which was not what I wanted in my research.

In Sure Start Greendale, a new programme, and a new community mutual organisation with its own governance structure was being developed. In reviewing the literature, I was also drawn to case studies on organisational autoethnography. The literature indicates that the prime focus of an organisational autoethnographic study is to illuminate the relationship between the individual and the organisation in a way that crystallises the key conceptual and theoretical contributions to understanding the relationship between culture and organisation (Boyle and Parry, 2007). Organisational autoethnography is orientated strongly towards the past and how organisations have functioned; Boyle and Parry (2007) argue that the historical dimension is a particular strength. However, after reflection I decided that this methodology would have lessened the focus on Sure Start, Greendale and participants, and emphasised the organisation of the Sure Start programme, which was not the main focus of my research. This approach would be helpful in researching a well-established programme or organisation, but not for a developing organisation in constant change and flux.

Insider/outsider research and leadership challenges

While undertaking this research I was director of Sure Start Greendale and also the chief executive officer of the newly formed community mutual children's centre. I was in post for over eight years and during this time I gathered most of the research data see (Appendix1). I was an insider but I was also an outsider as I did not live on the estate or have any shared history. I had left the post when I drafted the data analysis chapters. I was then an outsider. I have addressed the practicalities and ethics of insider and outsider research in chapter 6.

My health visiting gave me the knowledge and experience to engage with parents and gave me an 'in' to the estate. In the early weeks I was readily able to gain the confidence of a few parents who had approached me for advice on very personal and private issues. I helped and encouraged them. It became known in the estate that I was there to help and this facilitated me becoming an insider in Greendale. I was gaining the confidence of parents and they were accepting me which was very important given the history of scepticism and mistrust in the estate. I was becoming more established in Greendale both as a director and an insider. All staff meetings within the programme included feedback from parents. Staff members were being recruited and as they established their roles within the programme there was some dilution of hierarchy. Sure Start Greendale needed the support of parents if we were to succeed in establishing the programme. I needed the support of the community workers and the staff team to implement the programme which was heavily influenced by parental feedback. This approach fostered a collaborative, blame free, learning culture and I aimed to use my power as director and chief executive officer to enable this to happen. I knew that this change of culture in relation to how teams are led and managed was key to achieving positive change in communities like Greendale.

As director and chief executive officer I was acutely aware of my powerful position within the programme. I led on the recruitment of staff, on strategic planning, the capital programme, financial planning and presenting both nationally and locally on Sure Start. Staff members and parents were aware that I was the person in charge, the person who made all the operational decisions for the programme alongside the management board. The power differential was obvious. Managing the power differential with me as the director/chief executive officer combined with my insider researcher role was helped by my experience as a nurse and health visitor where the needs of clients was paramount. I had experience early on in the programme of mothers wanting support from me as a health visitor when they had a crisis. They were able to approach me and talk openly. I was trusted and seen as helpful and this enabled me to become accepted as an insider in Greendale. However being seen as a health visitor was also a challenge as I wanted and needed to get on with developing my director role and establishing the Sure Start programme and not providing support to individual parents. This was addressed to a large extent through the recruitment of community workers and professional health staff who could take on the support for these parents. However there were times where I could not ignore what I was

seeing and guided by the code of professional practice did get involved. I actively sought to keep these to a minimum.

The challenges of developing Sure Start Greendale were immense. Some of these challenges have been discussed in chapter 6 (pages139-145). Many were complex and impacted on parents and families and the Sure Start Greendale programme. Others have not been included for epistemological reasons as to do so may impact on the public perception of the Greendale estate. The pace and constant demands of establishing this new programme were enormous. However it was in this culture of constant change and development that opportunities to do things differently became very apparent. I was actively able to stand back and observe. I saw the potential for new ways of working, new ways of engaging communities and new models of leadership. I began to reflect on my role as an insider researcher and I valued this time as it helped me gain a greater understanding of the programme, a greater understanding of my role as director and also a greater understanding of myself as an insider researcher. This standing back also helped me gain a greater understanding of parents and other groups within Greendale. It also helped to provide a space for me to reflect on the emotional demands of my role which were constant and varied.

The research process and reflexive approaches

As the research proceeded, the research questions changed and developed. I was influenced by the work of Maxwell (1996), who argued,

> Models of design that place the formulation of research questions at the beginning of the design process, and see these questions as determining the other aspects of the design, don't do justice to the interactive and inductive nature of qualitative research (Maxwell 1996, p.17).

Maxwell (1996) also states that, "Often you will need to do a significant part of the research before it is clear what specific research questions you should try to answer". I was aware that I was starting out as a researcher with a blank canvass. I knew I wanted to study aspects of the Sure Start Greendale programme but I was uncertain about which perspective I should use. The idea of social class, a gender specific feminist approach and a community development approach were all considered. The broadness and scope of the research in the early development stage was

challenging. Potential research questions were drafted and discussed. The earlier questions were reviewed and redrafted as my knowledge and understanding of the research and the research setting increased. At a research annual review the chair advised that the work of the community workers and their relationship with parents ought to be a central theme in my research. From then on I focussed on Sure Start Greendale itself and my supervisors helped me to formulate the details of my research questions; the programme provided richness and boundaries, and an environment within which to interconnect data (Holliday, 2002). In effect everything in Sure Start Greendale was data: behaviour, talk, documents, meetings and other aspects. Although Greendale provided the setting within which the data were connected, as the researcher I was the one who made the connections (ibid.).

Some of my research questions revolved around the extent to which deficit models might drive the Sure Start programme and whether the programme might represent a form of social control and even discipline (Foucault, 1977; 1988), by getting people to think and feel the 'right' way (Gewirtz, 2001), rather than encouraging parents to think for themselves, and even perhaps question dominant agendas. Might there be evidence of competing agendas at play in what Sure Start Greendale represented? Might some parents on Greendale be inspired to question those who provided services and become more involved in service planning rather than being impassive consumers of services? To what extent did the programme symbolise a grass- roots approach to enabling change on Greendale and to what extent was this successful?

My research chronicled the changing narratives of parents, community workers and multi - agency representatives involved in Sure Start Greendale. I aimed to document and collaboratively interpret any changes in the quality of experience and how these meanings were linked to the Sure Start Greendale programme. I hoped that such a vibrant methodological process would generate a developing living account of the project, built on relationships of trust as well as a highly cooperative ethos.

> In the post-modern period with the breaking down of the traditional forms of society, one which was usually authoritarian with strong religious commitments to an over-arching belief system, bit by bit we see the arrival of a more provisional world, one

> where there is an increased sensitivity to diversities, differences, differentiations, to what has been called the 'pluralisation ethos' (Connolly, 1995, p.7).

Life history methodology "is peculiarly suited to discovering the confusions, ambiguities and contradictions that are played in everyday experiences" (Plummer, 2001 p.40) and, in this study, enabled the participants living on Greendale to tell their own stories in their own way. The life experiences of people living on the Greendale estate and their accounts were central to the research.

In reflecting on the parallel life events of being the director and researcher, of being a parent myself, a health visitor and trade union representative, I examined the experiences of each, and have seen how each influenced my thinking and understanding and how they collectively led to the ontological and epistemological positions that I took in this thesis (Cohen et al., 2007). This is explored in more detail in chapter 6.

Listening visits

I was aware of the Listening Visits in health visiting (Turner et al., 2010, Slade et al., 2010) a non-directive effective interventions for mild and moderate post-natal depression. An approach derived from the theories of Carl Rogers (1951) and his assertions around people having a positive regard, a positive self-regard and the need for this positive self-regard to be reflected back by a counsellor through listening and caring enough to understand. I was not formally trained in this approach but I had read information and on reflection I was using some of the principles in my health visiting practice. Listening, understanding and reflecting back were very much part of my directorship approach in Sure Start Greendale. The research has helped me better understand my two roles; as director and researcher. Unlike Haynes (2006) who studied the impact of research on the researcher and the research participants I did not share much information about myself. I was working on an ongoing basis within the programme and needed to maintain a professional relationship with staff in order to protect the integrity of the programme. While working in the programme, my daughter then a student went to India to undertake research in villages and became ill and upset by the levels of poverty. She shared how women in local villages were addressing domestic abuse and I shared this with the Sure Start programme. My son did his A levels and then travelled alone to China and Vietnam. There were

long periods of time where contact was limited and now both children had left home. I did occasionally share details of my personal life with staff members and parents especially in the early weeks and months of the programme when we cooked and ate together. My research was about Sure Start Greendale, parents, community worker and partner agency representatives and I wanted the focus of the research to reflect this.

Data collection methods

This section describes the methods that I used in order to gather a range of research evidence. These included semi-structured interviews with parents (n=7); focus group meetings with parents (n=4) and on two occasions, community workers (n=4); and individual in-depth auto/biographical interviews with community workers (the same 4), parents (n=2) and other participants in the Sure Start programme (n=3), some on more than one occasion. Altogether I carried out 21 interviews of different lengths and types with 20 participants (see Appendices 3, 4 and 5). These research methods generated many different approaches and aimed to establish rich and varied data, within a vibrant, recurring, reflexive and cooperative study. I set out to seek the views of mothers in Greendale. There were many single mothers on the estate and the vast majority of those accessing services and using the Sure Start building were mothers. I had already completed some research on the involvement of young fathers in Sure Start (Reeves and Rehal, 2008). The Sure Start guidance referred to parents and parents to-be and parent participation; there was no obvious differentiation between mothers and fathers. I have addressed this in referring to: ‘Engaging mothers’, page 159 and ‘Engaging fathers’ in page 162.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview approach, used early in the research, was utilised to gauge participants’ interest in the research, to establish myself as a field researcher and to identify potential participants for the in-depth interviews. Structured interviews are defined as a technique of data collection in order to obtain a richer familiarity with a phenomenon and clarify concepts as a basis of further research (Wilson, 1987) whereas semi-structured interviews are less formal interviews in which the interviewer in free to modify the sequence of questions, change the wording and explain them or add to them (Cohen and Manion, 1989, p.307)). This involved a more direct, personal approach which I wanted to use. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to ascertain current parent thinking about the role of community

workers, their perceptions of Sure Start Greendale, their views about the Greendale area and their social networks on the estate. I chose this approach as it enabled me to engage with parents at grass-roots level as a researcher. I had been providing strategic management to two Sure Start programmes during the preceding months and I had had little opportunity to engage with parents. Therefore I needed to establish myself as a researcher within the Greendale setting.

Semi-structured interviews were appropriate in that the questions and how they were framed could be understood by most parents on Greendale. I was aware of the literacy difficulties of some parents. (Baseline data on adult literacy levels indicated that over 66% of residents on the Greendale estate had a reading age of seven or less, (KCC, 2000)). A combination of open and closed questions was used to gather data and help identify emerging themes which helped influence how the research was developed. The questions varied from fixed-alternative and open-ended, which facilitated the assessment of attitudes relating to community workers, Sure Start Greendale and the provision of services. The questions were designed in consultation with two experienced community workers, who were themselves parents on the Greendale estate. The open-ended questions also allowed the opportunity to identify areas of interest, not anticipated in advance, and also areas requiring further exploration. Different styles of questions were used in order to eliminate a boredom factor and to trigger off the respondent's thinking process. Variety in questioning style stimulates the interest of the respondent and enhances response (Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992) (see Appendix 3).

Six participants were approached to answer the questions, all of whom had one or more children under the age of five years. All were approached during the lunch hour in the community café in the children's centre over three consecutive days. Six semi-structured interviews were completed in this way by seven parents: one was completed together by a husband and wife. Parents were interviewed by the researcher, asking each respondent the same questions initially with the same wording, some questions were rephrased if the participant indicated that they did not fully understand the question. This allowed me to record critical views and to pursue some areas in greater depth. The questionnaire was also used to identify potential participants for the later auto/biographical research interviews. Some discussion also took place with the community workers regarding potential participants but none of those involved in the semi-structured

interviews took part in the auto/biographical interviews. This was due to their changed circumstances mainly due to moving off the estate.

Ethical considerations were prioritised: all research participants received a letter explaining the research. All participants had the right to refuse to participate and the right to withdraw from participating in the research at any time. This was explicit in the cover letter. Confidentiality of participants was assured. Further ethical issues are discussed later in this chapter.

Focus group and in-depth auto/biographical interviews

The in-depth interviews included: focus groups with parents (n=4), and community workers (n=4 twice), and individual auto/biographical interviews with the community workers, other parents (n=2) and professionals (n=3). These will be discussed in turn.

In-depth interviews were conducted using open-ended questions (Spradley, 1979). Integral to the interviews was an emphasis on building a rapport with participants so they felt comfortable with the interviewer and able to express their opinion and or disagreement. There were regular check backs with the participants to ensure that they were content with both the process and the content of the interview. This approach enabled the participants to exercise their right to stop or withdraw at any time. Feedback on the planned research was positive. Parents and community workers were keen to have their voice heard. Community workers reported that "they felt valued" when included in research projects.

i) Focus group interviews with parents and community workers

Three focus group interviews were carried out, with parents (n=4) and community workers (n=4 twice). Firstly, parents met with me as a parents' participation group, and on one occasion this meeting was recorded as a focus group interview, involving four parents. The parents included a parent member of the Management Board and three volunteers who helped with the children's centre, local netball club and other activities. They were pleased to have the opportunity to review the Sure Start programme and its benefits to themselves, other parents and the local community, as well as reflect on changes brought about by the introduction of the programme and the development of the Sure Start building.

Approaches were also made to all members of the community worker team and two focus group interviews were arranged. The four community workers were already aware of my study and the purpose of the interviews was explained to them. As the director within the children's centre I understood that the community workers could feel under pressure to participate in the research, so l explored this with them and assured them that there was no obligation on their part to participate. These focus group interviews provided a space for me and the community workers to be reflective, where challenge of assumptions was encouraged and critical incidents within the programme were explored (Morgan, 1993). Each session lasted for one to two hours and was tape recorded.

The community workers were interviewed as part of a group on two occasions; they were keen to participate. All community workers participated (except for one who was new into post and had a different role supporting post-natally depressed mothers and fathers). Three of the community workers lived on the estate at the time of the interviews. They had helped to identify parents to participate in the external local evaluation and were also aware that the programme was part of the National Evaluation of Sure Start. They were also evaluating the programmes that they were running in Sure Start Greendale and they shared their findings at the team meeting where there was open constructive and supportive discussion. Reflection and learning were encouraged and part of the supervision process. Best practice in one group was shared and used to develop practice in other groups. Community workers worked openly and grew in confidence and they could change and develop with the findings from their evaluations. Participating in this research was not something completely new to them; they were already experienced in research and were clearly learning from it; they could see the value of research as it was helping them improve the programmes they were delivering and was also helping them to identify their own learning needs.

The community workers raised many issues during the research interviews and most could be discussed within the group setting. Some of the comments resonated with me as a researcher and needed further exploration. This was done by having a follow up interview with one of the community workers (and another briefly) on a one to one basis where there were no interruptions and where the subject we were to discuss was known beforehand.

ii) Auto/biographical interviews

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) describe open-ended, auto/biographical interviews as a way of building a psychosocial profile of an individual, consisting of:

> personal biography, discourse or meanings of the social world; defences or the intersubjective connections of how people are affected by others; and, events or how discourses and defences are suitable in a particular social context (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.23-24).

In terms of the auto/biographical interviews, the research was aiming for quality of data rather than quantity of participants. A literature search shows that research of this kind had been successfully carried out using fewer than six participants (Bell, 1993). Approaches were made in the first instance to three mothers identified by myself and the community workers and these were approached by me to take part. Two of the participants initially identified were interviewed once but then left the Greendale area, so are not included in the sample. One more participant was identified with the support of community workers; the (one original and one new) participants were then interviewed by myself. In addition, I interviewed the four community workers, as well as three other key professional participants in the programme whom I interviewed on a one to one basis. It must be emphasised that three of the community workers were also mothers, usually of older children, and from the Greendale area (see chapter 7). With the final sample of nine participants for this stage of the research, 12 in-depth auto/biographical interviews were carried out.

The main participants were selected as they brought different perspectives to the research. The first parent, Sue, had lived on Greendale since birth and had heard from her parents stories about the housing development in 1974 on the estate and the moving in of many new families. She was an active participant in the Sure Start Programme and continued to live on the estate with her young children under five years old. The second participant, Adele, moved to the estate when she was pregnant with her first child. She subsequently had two more children and lived with her partner on the estate. She engaged with many of the activities in the programme and was seen by team members to have grown and gained in confidence.

Participants needed to have a level of confidence to cope with an interview process, to want to tell their story and welcome the opportunity to participate. There were many mothers who lacked self-confidence; 'hard to reach' or families not attending the centre did not participate in the initial stages of the research as I was unable to undertake home visits. However, it was important to me as a researcher that the voices of 'hard to reach' family members were heard, and this was explored within the auto/biographical studies by including one of these mothers (Adele) in the interview sample (West, 2002). Full details of each parent and their interviews will be presented and discussed in chapter 8.

Approaches were also made to three individuals who worked in partner agencies, were self-employed, or who had direct involvement in the Sure Start Greendale programme. These were: a management board member of Sure Start Greendale, which incorporated and became Greendale Children's Centre Partnership Limited; a retired health professional who had worked on the Greendale estate in the 1980s and 1990s; and an administrative assistant who knew Greendale from the past and worked in the Sure Start programme. Similar ethical principles were applied to those used with the parents and community workers.

I was particularly interested and influenced by the role of language in the interview process.

> Current theories of language and communication stress that any kind of account can only be a mediation of reality, hence there can be no guarantee that different people will share the same meaning when it comes to making sense of the interviewee's account (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000, p.298-9).

Through the auto/biographical approach I was able to provide a space for both myself as the researcher and the participants to open and develop and change the themes or the direction of the interview (Merrill and West, 2009). The questioned were framed using words and language that would be readily understood by most parents. Details were repeated as necessary.

Most interviews lasted for about one hour. All interviews were recorded on a discreet but not hidden dictaphone. Interviews were transcribed and transcripts were shared with participants. Some changes were made as requested and some material was not used to protect individuals'

identities. Participants were asked to talk about their lives and I suggested that they see their lives as chapters, with an early childhood chapter, a middle chapter and a recent chapter which involved their experiences of Sure Start Greendale. I guided the participants through this structure but used open-ended questions to do so. I was aware of Mishler's (1986) argument that the question and answer method of interviewing had a tendency to suppress the respondent's stories. In an auto/biographical interview, the interviewee is the story teller, the narrator of the story being told, whereas the interviewer is a guide in the process. Together the two are collaborators, composing and co-constructing the narrative (Atkinson, 1998).

Narrative is a means of appreciating one's own and other's actions, of arranging these actions and events into a significant whole, and of joining up and identifying the significance of these events and actions over time (Bruner, 1986; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Hinchman and Hinchman, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1995). The narrative conveys the participant's point of view, and includes a rationale for why their story is important and worth telling. The auto/biographical interview not only enables the interviewee to describe what happens, it also provides a space to express emotions, thoughts and interpretation and a space for the researcher to be aware of these and interpret them. The narrative highlights the uniqueness of each human action and event rather than their common properties (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Field work diary and documentary evidence

A research diary was kept with detailed contemporaneous notes about specific incidents and experiences. These were notes written to myself to record my personal and professional insights, the beginnings of observation and increasing understanding, recurrent themes, words, questions, thoughts and concerns (Bell, 1993). I also recorded examples of where I was able to theorise using the literature, about difficult partnership issues within Start Greendale. The process of writing helped me reflect on the challenges of partnership working and better understand how to manage these.

Records of semi-structured interviews, auto/biographical interviews and meetings with community workers were all maintained to support and validate research findings. Notes were recorded around themes: language, power, dress, feelings, low incomes, partners, loss, bereavement, failures at school, failures as a parent and having been let down were common

features of parents' and participants' lives. This approach gave me a deeper understanding of the lives of people living on Greendale and helped me identify recurrent themes which enabled me to begin to organise the themes around which my analysis would concentrate. It also gave me insight into how I might narrate the stories of parents and community workers on their own terms. I sought to provide a clear and as complete a story as possible about Sure Start Greendale, the Greendale community and the parents and children living on the Greendale estate. Data from the programme, such as minutes of meeting, supervision notes, evaluation reports, annual reports were also kept.

Ethical considerations

> As field workers we need to exercise common sense and moral responsibility, and, we would like to add, to our subjects first, the study next, and ourselves last (Fontana and Frey, 1998 p. 72).

Being a nurse and health visitor I am bound by the standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2010), which state the need to:
" make the care of people your first concern, treating them as individuals and respecting their dignity; respect people's confidentiality; ensure you gain consent; be open and honest, act with integrity and uphold the reputation of your profession; and be impartial".

I had previously successfully completed the English National Board Higher Award Portfolio (1996). This award required evidence of the development of reflective practice within my sphere of work. I was able to bring these experiences to this research and supplement these with adherence to the BERA (2011) and University's ethical codes for conducting research.

Research involving human participants is inherently invasive and intrusive (Lindsay, 2000), and poses a risk to participants, particularly to children. I was aware that many of the research participants were vulnerable people and that I as a researcher needed to be more ethically responsible to ensure their well-being and not make them more vulnerable. I understood that ethical issues are important for all research and that sensitive researchers must however be more vigilant about disclosure and privacy and ensure confidentiality when working with vulnerable research participants (Liamputtong, 2007). Observational research is "vulnerable to questions of

ethical malpractice" (Adler and Adler, 1998, p.102) should the researcher venture into private places or misrepresent himself or herself. The ethics of an auto/biographical approach are particularly important given the potentially sensitive nature of the process and the material. In this study, participants were told by me that they had the right to withdraw from the process at any time. They were also told that they had the right to refuse to answer questions, and the right to read and agree or withdraw any material which I produced following on from their interviews. Participants appeared keen to take part and there were no questions asked about issues relating to withdrawal from the research. One participant asked for specific information about her background not to be used in the research. I reassured her that this would not be included as to do so would compromise her identity.

Fontana and Frey (1998) describe traditional ethical concerns as relating to the issues of informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm. I will address these three points in terms of their relationship to this project. Diener and Crandall (1978) define informed consent as:

> the procedure that allows individuals an informed choice as to whether they wish to participate in an investigation. The underlying assumptions are that participants take part, are given full information about the research and freely volunteer to participate (Diener and Crandall, 1978, p.57).

In addition to informed consent, I also assured participants of their right to privacy, both in terms of their participation in the research programme and in terms of using any data about them, including: using pseudonyms for all participants; being careful not to include information which might make their identity obvious; and not using any sensitive or personal material.

Because this research involved parents, protection from harm was a top priority. Parents were informed about the research and questions were asked to establish their level of understanding. The questions were framed using words and language that would be readily understood by most parents. Details were repeated as necessary. During the interview process the participating parents were asked periodically if they were comfortable with the interview process. Protecting the parents from harm was, therefore, primarily related to keeping information as private as possible. This took several forms:

- Not disclosing which parents were part of the research project to team members other than the community worker involved with the family.
- Providing written information to parents about the research.
- Explaining to parents their right to withdraw from the research project at any time without the need to provide a reason.

An additional ethical concern within Sure Start Greendale was the potential for me to exploit my 'insider' position. As a nurse and health visitor I was aware of the need to respect the confidences of the research participants and to ensure anonymity and this was extended to my role as an insider researcher. I explained to participants about the research and answered any questions raised. I needed to protect the rights and interests of participants in the research and this is evidenced in the recordings and transcripts. It was also discussed in supervision. I was influenced by the work of May (1980 p. 367-8) in which he discusses the special obligations that arise due to the fact that "these relationships are characterized by considerably extended personal exchanges, substantial dealings between the researcher and those whom he or she studies, and different research agendas". These obligations may be better understood in terms of a covenant rather than a contractual agreement that shapes the future between two parties, and an ethic that is responsive and reciprocal in nature (ibid). I was aware of the potential ethical issue and followed up with research participants following each interview.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality aims to conceal the identity of the research participants. Disclosing the identities could lead to harm and other negative outcomes. I understood that ethical issues are important for all research and that sensitive researchers must be more vigilant about disclosure and privacy and ensure confidentiality when working with vulnerable research participants (Liamputtong, 2007). Confidentiality was a major concern in the research study. I was helped by my experiences of being a nurse and health visitor where confidentiality was central to practice. Confidentiality was strengthened with the insider researcher and the community worker being the only people within the programme knowing which parents were involved in the research. Sure Start Greendale needed to gain the confidence of a very sceptical and mistrustful community and confidentiality needed to be assured both in practice and in research. Data from the auto/biographical interviews were adequately stored and transcribed to ensure confidentiality.

All research participants were given pseudonyms including Joan a member of the Sure Start Greendale management board and Beth a retired health professional and Fiona an administrative assistant. These three respondents who were outside of the Sure Start Greendale programme played significant roles.

Trustworthiness

The question of trustworthiness essentially asks: To what extent can we place confidence in the outcomes of the study? Do we believe what the researcher has reported? (Lincoln and Guba,1985). These are more appropriate questions to ask about a qualitative study than to assess its validity in a quantitative way (ibid.). To increase the trustworthiness of my research, I have applied the concept of trustworthiness in designing and carrying out this qualitative research. I have provided clear information on the purpose of the study; how participants have become part of the research; information on the specific people involved in the study; information on data collection and analysis procedures and also the findings. The detail provided about the research study allows the readers to consider and scrutinize the work. It gives them a basis for judging the credibility of the research and allows them to look closely at the sample and the specific ways in which I gathered data and undertook an analysis. It will contribute to their level of trust in the research outcomes. My research account includes much "thick description" (Geertz, 1993, p.6) and there is clarity around my chosen methodological approach.

The data gathering through a combination of methods in the Sure Start Greendale programme and the review of various Sure Start documents increase the likelihood that the area of research is understood from various view points and various ways of knowing. The identification of issues in group research meetings and the follow up of these issues with specific individuals add further strong credibility to the findings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I have complied with the methods of data collection proposed in the literature (ibid.). I used a research journal: fieldnotes in the early stages of the programme and then a research diary after registering as a doctoral student. I used audio taping for all interviews undertaken and shared the transcripts with my supervisor and on as many occasions as possible with those interviewed. This approach has enabled me to have an audit trail of my research efforts and further strengthens the credibility of the research.

I have worked openly with all participants in this research project. I have seen the research as a collaboration, a learning process, where there is no right or wrong, where parents, community workers, partner agencies and myself as the researcher have a voice. By working with others, including parents, community workers and partner agency representatives, the credibility of my research is assured. Team members act as "peer debriefers", keeping each other honest (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and this was also done by an outsider: my supervisor, who scrutinised my audit trail in relation to data gathering, listened to audio recordings, questioned some of my interpretations and proposed changes to the structure of the analysis chapters. Most participants were seen again informally following the interviews and they talked about the research process.

I sought their views about how the research was carried out and asked if, often several days or weeks later, they now had any issues about their contribution and if there was anything they would like to change. All participants were grateful for being part of my research and none wanted to alter their contribution. Particular chapters of the thesis have been shared with participants and feedback taken into account.

Data Analysis

Analysing the research data seemed a daunting task at the outset. There was no clear framework and it was apparent that data could be analysed using different approaches (Josselson, 2011). I had amassed a lot of data, not only through the auto/biographical interviews, but also through my access to the programme for eight years. In analysing the data I have tried to go beyond a simple description of the facts to providing a "thick description" (Geertz 1993, p. 6), which "gives the context for an experience, states the intentions and meanings that organised the experience, and reveals the experience as a process" (Denzin, 1994, p.505).

Following auto/biographical interviews I played and replayed the recordings. As a researcher I reflected on the data and the lives of participants. I began the analytical process before the interviews were transcribed. I was influenced by the work of Merrill and West (2009), who stated that biographical research may at first appear to be too much of an individual approach, "as biographies are largely analysed as an individualistic way of understanding the social world. Yet in constructing a biography a person relates to significant others and social contexts: a biography therefore is never fully individual" (ibid., p.39). I could link the data from the research

to the baseline data for the programme. The qualitative research data helped put 'the flesh on the bones' in relation to the Sure Start Greendale programme.

I was also influenced by the work of Chase (2005), who asserts that narrative inquiry differs from other forms of qualitative research and outlines a set of five analytical lenses through which researchers can approach empirical material. Firstly, narrative researchers should treat narrative data, whether written or oral, as a distinct form of discourse. It is retrospective meaning making - the shaping and ordering of past experience. Secondly, Chase (2005) argues that narrative researchers should view narratives as verbal actions, in which narrators explain, entertain, inform, defend, complain, and confirm or challenge the status quo. In analysing my data it was important that the 'voice' of participants was heard within their social setting and cultural context (as in Stanley and Wise, 1983).

Thirdly, Chase (2005) states that narrative researchers should view stories as both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances, including those within the narrator's community, which for my research was the Greendale community. While acknowledging that every auto/biographical story was unique, I was able through this third lens to look at similarities and differences across the stories and to understand more fully my role in the process. Fourthly, Chase urges researchers who use narratives to understand that these are performed for a specific purpose. The story told in a relaxed environment may differ from the same account told to a radio or local press reporter, or in the company of counsellors, or to the same researcher at a different time. I understood that the participants' stories were flexible and varied from one interview to the next. In seeking to answer the research questions, I was also aware of my part in influencing the direction and the richness of the participants' stories. My work in Greendale, knowledge of the Greendale area and the Sure Start programme, interaction with local parents and research participants all contributed to "a joint production of narrator and listener" (Chase,2005, p.657).

Fifthly, Chase (2005) argues that many narrative researchers should view themselves as narrators themselves as they develop interpretations and find ways to present or publish their ideas about the narratives they have studied (see also Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The five lenses when

applied make as much sense when applied to the researcher as they do when applied to the researched. I was aware of the interconnectedness of the lenses in relation to the Greendale story. My role as researcher was to do the connecting, to provide a space for participants to tell the Sure Start Greendale story.

The analysis was also influenced by feminist qualitative research (Stanley and Wise, 1983) and the notion that there "is no single approach, nor can any approach claim dominance or a privileged position. Given the substantive range, theoretical complexity, empirical difficulties, the multiplicity of voices is apt" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.7). Women on Greendale were best placed to tell the Sure Start Greendale story as they all had young children; they had all used Sure Start services and provided the context for their lives and the lives of their children and partners. They related the significance of the historical period of the Sure Start programme and together we were able to frame and contextualise the research story. I was particularly influenced by the work of Alway (1995), who argued that research should "try to produce less false, less partial, and less perverse representations without making any claims about what is absolutely and always true" (p.225).

Through the analysis I needed to ensure that the voice(s) of parents and others were heard and that the voice was representative of the Greendale area. My aim was to analyse the data and identify the recurring themes and examine and question these with the people concerned, in a process of shared learning. I worked with experienced community workers in analysing the data and constantly scrutinised with them my interpretation of situations. I was also able to test out my interpretation of research findings in conversation with parents, who were often able to add additional information and suggested other areas to research. In addition, I had many discussions with senior community members, an independent researcher, my supervisors, management board chair and local partner agency staff. I discussed research findings in general terms and probed their views of my interpretation. These interactions often flagged specific issues which influenced the content of the next cycles of data gathering and analysis. I was guided by parental and community worker concerns and the quest to gain a deeper understanding of the Greendale community and the Sure Start programme. Overall, my research methodology and findings were

discussed and scrutinised by community workers, senior community members and parents in a highly collaborative approach.

In undertaking the analysis, I reviewed the work of Denzin (1989) and agreed that analysing data is a tremendously creative act in that it gives life and voice to people's stories. I tried to strike a balance between letting the voices of participants on Greendale be heard and offering some interpretation and some theoretical insight. Merrill and West's work (2009) provided guidance on different approaches to the analysis of biographies. Merrill gives a practical step by step approach to the stages of the analysis process. She advocates coding to help make sense of the data. Coding is a process by which data are broken down, conceptualised and put back together in new ways (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

The recordings of the interviews were listened to on a number of occasions and notes taken. The transcripts were read soon after the interviews and re-read on many occasions over the course of the research. With research questions in mind, specific issues relating to these questions were annotated in different colours throughout the transcripts. This colour coding helped to identify particular themes and this enabled me to cluster responses to these highlighted themes. The annotation and clustering helped to make sense of the data in relation to addressing the research questions. This process helped to sift out the essential data that I would use in relation to the analysis and also helped identify data that I would not use. This was very useful as the data sets were extensive.

Conclusion

Great care was taken in choosing the research methodologies which were appropriate for the research questions and the context of the research. By choosing a qualitative, interpretative approach with auto/biographical, ethnographic methodologies and elements of action research, the voices of parents, community workers and partner agency representatives could be heard which was important to me as the researcher. The chapter has explained the data collection methods, including in-depth focus group and individual auto/biographical interviews, the approach to data analysis, as well as ethical issues and trustworthiness dimensions of the research.

CHAPTER SIX

The Research: Early Stages

Introduction

In this chapter I explore some of my earlier experiences as a Sure Start director and developing researcher. I draw particular attention to specific incidents that were traumatic and challenging and which influenced the development of the programme and my development as a researcher. These are discussed in the context of being not only an emerging researcher but also an "insider researcher". I discuss the practicalities and the ethics of 'insider research', as experienced during the early stages of the programme through to the eight year period I worked as director within the Sure Start Greendale programme, four of which I was also a researcher. I was aware that at the same time as being director and an insider researcher in Greendale I was also an outsider as I did not live in Greendale and had no history on the estate. The chapter will cover three main phases in which my roles changed: the first phase covers setting up and establishing the programme, during which time I was the director of the programme but not researching it; the second phase covers the period in which I was both director and researcher; and the third phase (the analysis and writing up period), in which I am researcher but no longer director. In each phase I will draw on critical incidents and discuss them in relation to the literature on insider research.

I am writing this thesis from the perspective of my background, my professional practice as a health visitor since 1979 or, to be more precise, from the perspective of an approach that values the experience of practice. I adopt what has been referred to as an enquiry-based attitude which involves the three criteria laid out by Robson (2002, p.16) for research in general: namely, "a systematic approach to what I am doing and why, an open approach to my ideas and formulations, therefore being open to their possible disconfirmation, and an ethical approach to the investigation which safeguards the interests of those who are affected by it".

The term 'insider research' is used to portray research programmes where the researcher has a frank and open association with the research location (Robson, 2002). This differs with old style

ideas of research in which the researcher is an 'objective outsider' researching issues external to his/her self (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.572). Insider research has provoked much debate and scrutiny. A question that frequently arises is: What effect does the researcher's insider status have on the research process? I will endeavour to answer this in the following account.

Phase 1: Director's role: insider perspectives

During the first phase of the Sure Start Greendale programme, I started to develop my research thinking and research approach, although I had not formally started researching the programme. I had gained in-depth knowledge and experience of working with local parents, staff members and partner representatives from local organisations (see also chapter 5). My professional practice and experience helped influence the formulation of the research questions for this research study. My personal background and experience have also influenced my decisions throughout my life and this research is no exception.

As an insider and director of the programme I shared the work and often the social world of the research participants but I was conscious that I did not have a shared history. I understood and appreciated the context of Sure Start Greendale in a way not open to an outsider researcher. I was immersed in the programme and had insights and sensitivities to things both said and unsaid and to the culture and priorities operating at the time of each research activity. These were all available to me as director. My director role offered a further advantage for insider research in that there was the possibility for "enhanced rapport" (Hockey, 1993, p. 119) between myself and the research participants. Hockey suggests that respondents are more likely to divulge "intimate details of their lives to someone considered empathetic" (ibid.). I was aware of the potential for "overfamiliarity" and "taken for granted assumptions" (ibid.), in relation to my director and insider role. The organic development and nature of the programme and the on-going day to day challenges and experiences minimised these pitfalls.

Sure Start Greendale: the first years

At the beginning of the Sure Start Greendale programme in 2000, I recorded in my workbook (which was later used for my research), that I was 'able to influence developments' and 'to engage with local parents and children'. I was beginning to get the programme established. I had started to recruit the community worker team and I had organised a few parent participation

events. A number of parents were playing a major role in organising events, but there were many parents still to contact and engage with the programme. I had gained the trust of some parents: many were already confiding in me about issues in their private lives. They sought support from me and I needed their support to establish the programme. This was on reflection a set of symbiotic relationships in relation to Sure Start Greendale, as in Bashford (2004):

> The ability to engage parents (is) put down to the type of relationships built up between staff and parents. Rather than a them-and-us mentality, parents feel that the team is working alongside them and not being judgemental. Parents talk about feeling understood, respected, seen and heard, which leads them to trust the workers (Bashford, 2004, p.24-25).

These relationships enabled me to become an insider in Greendale and create the momentum for the development of the programme. I recorded in my workbook (which was later used for my research) that I was 'able to see the impact of changes on children and families'. I saw children and parents having fun together. Children were eating foods that they had not experienced before. Parents were talking to me and also to each other and supporting each other.

Although there were some tensions in the roles of director and health visitor in the earliest phase of the programme, they also fed into each other, as my knowledge as a health visitor of early years and engaging young families directly helped me become accepted by parents and an insider and also helped me get established as a director. My confidence increased as roles became clearer. I felt that it was important to establish and embed my director role, before consciously taking on the role of insider researcher. As the programme developed, I also had staff available to support parents and could begin to allocate time within the programme for my research. I was also helped through effective supervision from a member of the Sure Start Greendale Management Board and partner agency representatives.

Phase 2: Director and researcher

Quite early in the Sure Start programme, I began to think about carrying out some research, developing ideas for my research dissertation and the possibilities of exploring issues of power and powerlessness. I started to review the literature on reflexive practice, praxis and insider

research, (Freire, 1976; Cohen et al., 2007; Mercer, 2007). As previously mentioned, Freire (1976) had a profound influence on the development of my thinking about reflexivity. He constantly stressed the importance of the dynamic relationship between theory and practice and between reflection and action - active reflection and reflective action. It is through this process of praxis that we raise awareness of our situations and circumstances and work to transform them.

I noted in my workbook (which was later used for my research) the need for 'consciousness-raising in self, staff and parents' and that I was working with mainly 'dis-empowered parents and staff'. I was also becoming 'aware of the high levels of domestic abuse, mental health issues and poverty' in the Greendale estate as I was working closely with the parents. Most of the parents knew I was a health visitor and often sought out my expertise on family and child health issues. In practice there was little evidence of a power differential. I responded, but actively did not initiate discussion on issues that could be seen as the remit of the health visitor. This was very difficult and uncomfortable at times, as I was torn between supporting individual parents and children and getting on with my job of establishing the programme (Mercer, 2007).

Tensions between my role as director and former role as a health visitor were more evident initially than tensions between the director and researcher roles. There were times when I had to prioritise the immediate needs of parents and children as I could not ignore what I was being told and what I was seeing. My access to parents and children was open and they were also able to access me. I worked 'with' parents alongside other members of the team and heard about their lives and experiences, and over time as the programme was developing, I guided some parents to staff members for support and advice. This enabled me to spend more time as director developing the programme. I needed to keep this perspective, this balance. I needed to develop the programme, but knew that to do so effectively I needed to remain close to the parents. Delivering an effective programme where parents felt supported was my priority, but I was also aware of my power position in this process.

This was the first Sure Start programme in the county and there were high expectations (KCC, 2000), with a constant pressure to deliver. My position of power weighed heavy on my shoulders and I felt a great sense of responsibility. I felt that for the programme to succeed I needed to

work closely with parents, needed to minimise the power differential between myself and the parents (Letherby, 2003) so that they would communicate their true feelings about issues and not just tell me what they thought I would like to hear. I was aware that in relationships with power differentials those with less power may say what pleases those in power rather than what they truly think. At this time it felt as if the programme and myself as the director were open to scrutiny on all fronts. I became more aware of the need to try and establish a robust evidence base for the work that I was pioneering within Sure Start Greendale. This also helped me with my research as I was able to stand back and question and critique our approaches. As Delamont (2003) emphasises, the insider researcher needs to take steps to "make the familiar strange".

My approach of working 'with' parents was common in my roles as director and researcher. As a researcher I sought to document the experiences of parents who were accessing the Sure Start programme. Similarly, as director I wanted to ensure that the voice of parents was heard in relation to influencing the development of the programme (Letherby, 2003). The interviews with parents were planned in advance and at the time there seemed to be little if any role conflict in relation to working with the parents as director of the programme and as researcher.

Greendale and domestic abuse

Working with parents and children also impacted on me as a person. When the programme was based in a flat on the estate, the extent and severity of domestic abuse became more apparent. The flat had been given to the programme by the council and there had been alleged issues with the previous tenant. The door was daubed with the words 'pedo' and 'paediatrician' (sic); local parents told me that nobody wanted to move into that flat and that the previous tenant was now in prison for sex offences. It was confirmed later in correspondence I was party to that the previous tenant was in prison. Mothers fled domestic abuse and came into this flat on more than one occasion.

The level of violence caused me great concern. On one occasion, a mother came into my office with her toddler on a Monday (my director status and power differential did not impact on her decision). She had been subjected to domestic abuse over the whole weekend. She was distraught and exhausted and had managed to escape from her flat and fled to our office not far from her own address. She looked as though she was about to collapse. I took the toddler from her arms

and held him. He was rigid. He felt like a piece of board. I was shocked. I had supported mothers who had experienced domestic abuse over the years. I had read about and experienced how domestic abuse impacted on children, but never realised how abuse could cause a toddler to freeze up in this way. He was pale and looked underweight and traumatised, but he smiled. This learned behaviour is used by children to stave off abuse. He could not relax. He could not eat or sleep. He was frozen in fear for many hours.

I was concerned for the mother and child. I was also concerned for the staff team who were in the office on the estate. As director I needed to assess the dangers to the team. I had been told that there were some firearms on the estate and also an incident near our flat where a machete was used. How would we cope if an angry aggressive father came into the flat? We had no security personnel, we had no additional security. Our programme was in the centre of the estate, we were easily accessible, but could I ensure my staff were safe? After some incidents I could not sleep at night. I worried that an aggrieved father would come into the programme brandishing a gun and kill or injure staff and parents. I talked with the local police officer and was given a number to contact in an emergency. We also had an alarm installed with a direct line to the police station. After domestic abuse events I ensured that I was first in the office in the morning and last to leave at night. This way I could be there to manage the situation and support staff if there was an incident. On reflection, would I have been able to handle an aggressive father brandishing a shotgun? As director I knew about the level of violence but I felt confident and strong and able to protect my team. Given similar circumstances now, I would be more cautious.

> I needed to be a powerful director when working with the police to ensure the safety of the Sure Start team but I also needed to be open and accessible to local parents experiencing domestic abuse. There was no conflict with these approaches as I was experienced and able to switch as needed.

I learned that if the programme was going to make a real difference to people's lives we needed to address the issue of domestic abuse. I knew that children cannot learn when they are crippled with fear. Domestic abuse training for staff, good supervision and quality services for parents

and children, especially around domestic abuse, would be priority within the programme. Some staff members also disclosed domestic abuse in their own lives. During the development of the programme the level of domestic abuse seemed at times overwhelming. If we were to make a difference, we needed to creative a momentum to challenge the status quo in homes where there was domestic abuse. We needed effective outreach from community workers and programmes for victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse. We needed to keep our staff team and myself safe.

The level of domestic abuse on the estate also influenced me as a researcher. Domestic abuse is about power and control and I was interested in gaining a greater understanding of power and powerlessness issues on the Greendale estate. I had read literature on empowering whole communities (Gilchrist, 2004; Popple, 1997), but these seemed too distant and too academic in relation to the reality of Greendale, where many parents were disempowered through varying levels of domestic abuse. I reflected on the work of Foucault (1980, 1982) and his assertion that to understand power you needed to look at where it impacted. Domestic abuse was holding back individuals and families and this needed to be addressed. This needed to change. We could not empower the Greendale community without first empowering the parents and staff members. This is what I needed to research. In particular I wanted to chronicle any shifts in power. Bashford (2004, p. 24-25) explained this type of shift in power through a parent case study: the parent had three children, two of whom were under four years of age and Bashford quotes the parent's voice:

> 'I felt like all the time I was doing something wrong. I just needed to hear that people had the same kind of problems and that I wasn't alone. I went to the centre and between us we worked out things that might help. It certainly helped because I could find out information that I couldn't actually get unless I talked with my health visitor' (Bashford, 2004, p.24-5).

These feelings of not being a good enough parent were very familiar to me as a health visitor and now also as a researcher. Mothers in Greendale valued hearing that they were not alone and that many other mothers had similar thoughts. They felt reassured by going to the children's centre and meeting other mothers in comparable situations (see chapter 7 for more detail). I wanted to better understand the 'space in between' parents and the programme and to really understand if

Sure Start Greendale was making a difference. It was in these difficult and challenging spaces that I began to undertake my research. Although I was in the thick of all this as a director but was only a novice researcher, the two roles in many respects complemented each other; my role as director was enhanced by also being an insider researcher and vice versa (Mercer, 2007).

Capital funding and Sure Start Greendale

The programme was allocated £1.25M for an early years building. After much discussion and debate the local council agreed to project manage the building. Architects were engaged and worked with myself and parents to come up with a good design. The proposed building was then costed and was over the budget allocation by about £250K. It was agreed by Sure Start Greendale management board that we would keep to the proposed design and seek additional funding. The council agreed to submit bids for SRB and Objective 6 European funding. A partner agency would secure additional funding from the Lottery to cover the out of school club and we would secure the Neighbourhood Nursery capital funding. It was high risk and I was very aware of the need to spend the capital within a relatively short time scale.

There had been tensions within Greendale from the beginning of the Sure Start programme. For instance, there were differences among partner agencies around the purpose of the programme, as outlined in chapter 4. These were becoming more evident to me as I started to study the programme from a research point of view. With my insider awareness I was aware of the potential problem of "the prophet in own country phenomenon" (Robson, 2002, p.535) and that "outside advice may be more highly valued". Parents generally did not see young children as a priority group in relation to local needs. The teenagers were the group that adults on the estate focussed on. They saw them generally as difficult and troublesome. Parents clearly articulated that they wanted a Sure Start for teenagers and, with the support they were receiving now, they wished they had had Sure Start when their teenage children were small. The parents felt it would help them cope with their teenagers' difficult behaviours.

Over time in 2001-2002 we began to get positive feedback on the various funding applications. There were a total of nine funding streams and we would have more than the £250K needed. This outcome should have been positive, but what transpired was shocking and placed the whole capital programme at risk. One of the local councillors and other members of the Sure Start

Greendale management board saw an opportunity to use the additional secured funding for 'their own' programme for teenagers, separate from Sure Start, and by doing this jeopardised the whole capital programme. One of the local councillors was a member of the Sure Start management board and also a member of the Capital sub-group. He said that the Sure Start capital funding should have come through the local council and not directly to the local partnership. As part of the sub-group, he had been asked by me to take forward aspects of the capital project with officers in the council, for example around ownership and leasing of the building. He did not progress this and I contacted senior officers at the council who were unaware of what was needed from them. At a Capital Project sub-group meeting held in a Portakabin, I raised with the councillor the actions that he had agreed but had not done and:

> He started to shout and punched the table when I raised the issues that he was supposed to have actioned. He stood up and stormed out of the Portakabin and said that he was not going to be spoken to in this manner (Extract from fieldnotes).

I was really shaken. I had never been spoken to like this before. We were still in the flat (as this was before we moved into the new building) and not only was I very worried about the safety of staff, but now also very worried about the capital project. I thought of the community centre and the secondary school that had been promised on Greendale but nothing had come to fruition due, to what was referred to by Buck et al., (1990) as "local fractious politics". Local parent's instinctive mistrust of agencies surfaced, I was now fully immersed in this local political scene and it was harrowing. Could we secure enough support from the management board to get all the capital funding streams together to deliver the building?

In my fieldnotes, I recorded:

> I thought of the work of Gaventa and the power of inaction. The councillor was holding up the progress of the capital building because he was not following up on his agreed actions. This power of inaction was to become a common feature of working on Greendale (Extract from fieldnotes).

To progress the capital project we were having frequent management board meetings. In my diary I wrote that these 'have been a nightmare' and 'I am so tired'. The local councillor and three other local community groups wanted to take the additional funding that was secured to build a resource for teenagers. This was discussed openly at meetings. How could I as director ensure that this would not happen? How could I secure the support of parents who also felt that teenagers were the priority group? Parents needed to work "with" me on this issue as the capital funding was earmarked for early year's provision and not for older children and this was not negotiable. In this situation the government department held the power, leaving Sure Start Greendale, the director, the parents and the staff team all in a position of relative powerlessness. However if we worked together we could secure the capital project.

The behaviour of a local councillor and representatives from the three community groups was a major risk to the programme, as I recorded:

> [They] are behaving unreasonably, they are working in a pack, you can see the eye contact, the grimaces across the management board table. They are behaving like (rude word). They are pushing it to the limit. They know we cannot progress the building as it is without the additional money, they know, they know they have the power and the power game is played out across the management board table. They were not going to agree - the power of non-participation is apparent. By not agreeing they were holding up the building and they knew it (Extract from fieldnotes).

I discussed the power of inaction by some partner agencies with the chair of the Management Board. We needed a way to break the deadlock in relation to the capital funding streams. The power dimension had shifted in favour of the councillor; this was more evident to me as I was reading about power relations in communities as part of my research (Hardy & Clegg, 1996; Jensen et al., 1999). We agreed that our strategy should be working with parent representatives on the management board and seeking their support in ensuring that, if it came to a vote in relation to the funding streams, the Sure Start Capital Project would get the support needed:

> Parents were going to take the message that we needed all the funding streams to build the Sure Start building. The money (£1.25M) was there for Greendale already and we

> could not risk losing this. They were going to take this message to the Sure Start Greendale management board and hopefully there would be a consensus on the way forward (Extract from fieldnotes).

At the following meeting, parents took a major role in arguing that all the funding streams should go as originally planned into the Sure Start Capital Project. They talked about their children on Greendale and their needs. The councillor and other representatives from mainly the community groups then talked about themselves as parents, which was inappropriate as they were there to represent their organisations. It appeared to me that by focussing on themselves as parents they were in some way undermining the parent representatives on the management board. During the meeting I looked at the chair of the Management Board and we both acknowledged through eye contact that our strategy had not worked.

I was exhausted and tensions were running high. The inaction and procrastination by the councillor and community group representative was taking its toll. I was angry that partner agency representatives could continue with behaviours that placed the Sure Start capital project at risk. Why were they behaving like this? I talked with the Sure Start Regional Officer and with the chair of the management board. I went on a much needed holiday and flew over the district on route to the continent. I reflected on the issue of power and its distribution within a community like Greendale. Could it be quantified? Is it finite in a community like Greendale? How could it be distributed to enable change? A greater understanding of these issues developed through being a researcher which would help me also in my role as director. My director's role through which I experienced a wide range of challenging situations and events also helped me in my role as researcher as it provided me with the materials for my research study.

During this time, the evaluation team from the local university college were engaging with some parents (West et al., 2001, 2003). We were also informed that Sure Start Greendale would be part of the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS, 2002a & b) and that researchers would be in the area during the following weeks. At the time I thought that I had enough to do to try and keep staff safe, the capital programme on track, develop the programme, make arrangements for the local evaluation team, and now having researchers from the National Evaluation seemed almost

an impossible lot. This added yet another layer and tensions in roles. Not only was I researching my own programme as an insider researcher, but now outsider researchers were about to evaluate the programme.

On my return from holiday, the capital programme was priority. I met the chair of the management board and senior officers in the council. We were going to take a different approach. The statutory agencies and the parents wanted the building to go ahead and we would pursue this even if we had to reduce the size of the building and rely on purely the Sure Start Capital grant. Some of the other funding streams that were agreed had to have matched funding through the Sure Start capital grant so would not be available to build a resource for teenagers on Greendale. I noted that:

> It had come to a head, the statutory agencies had wanted the building to go ahead - they were organising - they would ensure all their members' representatives attended the next meeting - it would go ahead (Extract from fieldnotes).

The meeting was planned with precision. It would take place in the evening; (all previous meetings took place during the day). All statutory agency representatives were contacted by phone by me and told that they needed to attend and I would also ensure that all parent representatives on the management board would attend. We needed to provide a crèche for children. There would be one item on the agenda, and this was the funding for the Sure Start Greendale capital programme. Agreement was sought that all funding streams that had now been agreed should be part of the bigger Sure Start capital project. Also it was proposed that if this was not agreed, then Sure Start Greendale would go ahead with a reduced sized building in line with the original capital sum.

It was a very brief meeting held in the new Portakabins on a very warm evening. The proposal was carried without discussion. The councillor and some of the representative from community groups did not attend. It all seemed so straightforward on the day. The significance of the decision was immense, we could progress with the capital project with all the allocated funding streams, the logjam was broken and parents on Greendale would get the building that they had

helped plan and design. The months of uncertainty and difficult partnership working were over. The programme now entered a new phase, the delivery of the building.

Phase 3: looking back as outsider researcher

I have written this account of establishing the Sure Start Greendale programme from an insider's perspective. My account will be different from each parent representative, from each management board representative, from local and national evaluators and others. There were multitudes of relationships, between parents and staff, parents and evaluators, myself as director and staff, and many others and these relationships were interconnected within the total social milieu on Greendale.

I do not claim my account as the one true account, but in the post-modern age when critics claim that objectivity is impossible and all accounts are equally valid or invalid, I respond that of course objectivity is impossible, but that it does not follow that all accounts are equally plausible or that we should not cease trying to develop better explanations of social phenomena. I was the director of Sure Start Greendale from its inception through to delivery and beyond. I was there day after day working with staff and parents. On reflection, I saw the whole film of Sure Start Greendale being played out each day from start to finish. Others, including partner agencies, local and national evaluators saw snapshots of the programme. I saw the whole film and as part of my role as director I was instrumental in ensuring the existence of the film including, 'the good, the bad and the ugly'.

However I was influenced by the work of Harris (1994), an anthropologist who wrote:

> The most productive intellectual response to the exposure of biases, hidden agendas, and lack of certainty... is not to adopt paradigms that from the outset promise even greater biases, more cryptic agendas, and total uncertainty. Rather it is to work within scientific paradigms to reduce biases, expose hidden agendas, and decrease uncertainties (Harris, 1994, p.xix).

My insider position was complemented and constantly refined by on-going feedback from outsiders, including management board members, partner agency representatives, the Sure Start

regional officer, and by local and national evaluators. This was an evolving process of feedback and I was not dependent on feedback purely from staff employed within the programme. Since leaving the programme, I can now see things from an outsider's perspective in relation to time, place, experience and psychological pressures. I can see from my account of the programme that I have now become consciously aware of what an insider might take for granted and not see as needing an explanation: the familiar has become strange (Delamont, 2003). Now as I complete the writing of my thesis I reflect and "at the end of all the exploring, will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time" (T.S. Eliot 1942).

Reviewing the literature on reflection and also organisational politics, Sure Start Greendale as a developing programme was composed of people who "have varied task, career and personal interests" (Morgan, 1998, p.147), which allows us to understand an organisation as a political entity. This was particularly relevant as Sure Start was a high profile New Labour initiative. Pfeffer (1981, p. 4-5) defines organisational politics as: "those activities carried out by people to acquire, enhance, and use power and other resources to obtain their preferred outcomes in a situation where there is uncertainty or disagreement". The meaning of politics in an organisation is conceptualised as "the exercise of power to negotiate different interests among members while maintaining one's interest in certain organisational issues" (Costley et al., 2011 pp.38-39). Hardy and Clegg (1996) state that the functionalist perspective of organisational politics indicates that "power is exercised during the decision-making arena as part of a deliberate strategy to achieve intended outcomes". Jensen (1997, p.25) explores the concept of power and politics of work based learning and ask questions such as: 'Who speaks and why?' 'Who speaks for whom?' and 'To whom is one speaking?' His analysis requires us to question the motivation for carrying out research, the reason for doing it and the contribution it can make. In this sense there is a moral obligation to have an understanding of what drives the research.

Conclusion

The main driver in my research was to gain a greater understanding of power and powerlessness issues on the Greendale estate within the context of a programme called Sure Start. I wanted to give opportunities to parents, community workers and partner agency representatives to tell their stories and have a voice (Letherby, 2003). I wanted to ensure that aspects of the Sure Start

Greendale programme were chronicled and recorded in print for future generations and that the research might influence the commissioning and development of other community projects. Looking back and with hindsight, I also wanted this model of working, where organisations worked 'with' (Rehal & Langley, 2004), rather than just delivered services 'to' communities, to be part of mainstream public service thinking.

In the following chapters I analyse the data from focus groups and interviews with participants in the programme. Chapter 7 looks in detail at the role of community workers within the Sure Start Greendale programme. Data from the community worker interviews are analysed and discussed within the framework of building community in the Greendale estate.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Community workers' roles and perspectives

Introduction

This chapter traces the development of the community worker role, their contribution to the expanding provision of services, and their perspectives on the changing nature of the programme to meet the needs of the local community. Data from the community worker interviews are analysed in the context of engaging parents, creating a safe space, building trust, building community and also the views of the community workers regarding their own role. It also details the auto/biographical narrative of Liz a local parent living on the Greendale estate and her views about Sure Start Greendale and how it has helped bring about change in the community. Towards the end of the chapter the auto/biographical narratives of Liz and local parents (chapter 8) and partner agency representatives (chapter 9) evidenced a range of key issues that impacted on people's lives and experiences. Some of these issues are explored in full in chapter 7 and other themes are explored in chapters 8 and 9.

Background: community workers' roles and recruitment

The title 'community workers' was not part of the original Sure Start Greendale plan. There was a befriender service (KCC, 2000) which was seen as the primary link between the community and the programme. As described in chapter 4, the programme was to have three distinct strands of delivery: one of which was direct services which included the director and the befriender service. The befriender service was universal to Greendale, with a team of trained befrienders visiting every family of a new born baby on the estate within the first two months of the birth. Where ever possible they would make home visits during the confinement period to prepare the parents and other close family members for the arrival of the new baby.

The original job description was drafted by the Sure Start Steering Group. The language used reflected an approach that was then the accepted norm, of professionals knowing what was best and prescribing what was needed. Examples of this language included: "in order to give information", "visit families…initially within three months and again at 18 months". This language was rather directive and inflexible and did not reflect the approach that, in my opinion, was needed in Greendale. There was also evidence of the establishment of a hierarchical order

within the job description, with the befriender role feeding back to Sure Start professionals who might then refer the families to specialist services. In my view we needed a role that was flexible and strong and empowering to parents and not mitigated through other professionals. We needed a new approach, a new language to engage a sceptical and disengaged community.

The views of parents were sought at a meeting on the title of the new role and the content of the job description. The title was not acceptable to any of the parents present (meeting notes Nov 2000). Some thought that mothers who needed a befriender would be seen as having something wrong with them and that they were being singled out as being in need of some help. One mother said "(I) don't want (a) stranger in my home" and this sentiment was echoed by many others (meeting notes). Some linked the local level of deprivation with the title and role of the befriender and viewed having a visit from a befriender as a stigma (meeting notes, Nov 2000). After a long discussion we agreed to use the word 'community' before befriender so that the emphasis would be on the community rather than on individual mothers, and it was agreed to use the title 'community befriender' to advertise the posts.

The community befriender role was key to engaging the local parents and I needed to ensure that we worked with local parents in developing it. Conscious that the original job description was drafted by members of the Sure Start steering group, and was part of the delivery plan agreed by the Minister, I set about changing the language and emphasis while maintaining the original structure. The new job description reflected this: 'Initially to provide a community befriending service', 'Progress to offering a home visiting service', 'To provide support, information'. The language used in the revised job description was very different from the original. It was less prescriptive, softer and more engaging. The community befrienders would play a major role in winning over the Greendale parents and the job description formed the basis for this. They would: 'Encourage and empower parents to recognise their own skills' and 'Seek out parents' views on need and service development'. The role was independent of, and non-hierarchical in relation to, statutory agency input.

Looking back, this was a crucial period in the development of the programme. We needed to recruit local people who could gain the confidence of local parents and words in the new person

specification reflected this: ‘Friendly outgoing personality, pleasant, helpful, sensitive manner with awareness of clients’ needs and a sense of humour’. In addition, I undertook a SWOT analysis of the community befriender role, drafted an options paper and shared this at the Sure Start management board. Support was sought from the board members to proceed with the recruitment using the revised job description. The proposed options were agreed. The community befriender person specification contained the word “clients” in relation to those who would receive services in the Sure Start Greendale programme. I reflected on this and chose to use this title rather than use the words parents or residents as early on in the programme many grandparents and some uncles and aunts were also involved in helping to develop the programme. The use of the word parents in this context was too narrow.

In late 2000, four community befrienders were recruited. These were all women and three were mothers from the Greendale area who had older children themselves (Penny, Liz and Jo). These women, especially Penny who had younger children (the youngest was five years old), knew first-hand the types of problems faced by parents on the Greendale estate. This knowledge, which would be valued and shared with the programme, would be crucial in creating empathy and building trust in the community. These new staff members had an extensive orientation programme and spent time with local service providers. They worked closely with the director in setting up the Sure Start programme. However, the term ‘community befriender’ did not reflect the work undertaken and, within the first six months, in consultation with parents, the ‘befrienders’ became known as ‘community workers’. This was very significant for the programme. Parents’ views were being heard and taken into account (as advocated in NESS, 2002a). Never in my experience of working in public services had a provider changed the title of staff members to accommodate the views of parents.

From the outset Sure Start Greendale was required to have an annual independent local evaluation. As the programme was developed it became part of the national Sure Start evaluation. Community workers and other staff members were aware prior to my research that Sure Start was a high profile programme and that evaluation was given a high priority. Over the course of the research, community workers and other staff were also encouraged to undertake an evaluation of services and groups they were delivering. Staff were encouraged to feedback on

this at staff meetings. Community workers, other staff members and partner agency representatives were all familiar with the concept of research and some had participated in the local evaluation prior to my auto/biographical interviews.

Building Trust

There was little trust on Greendale prior to Sure Start. As described in chapter 4, many parents talked about feeling let down by the statutory agencies (Kesby, 2000). The community workers faced many challenges in building the parents' trust. They offered support, advice and friendship and some practical help to families through home visits and facilitating groups at the children's centre. A cost-price home safety equipment scheme was established and home safety visits by a trained community worker were offered to all families with a child aged six months.

The community workers described how they helped set up the programme and how they attended many training courses. They discussed how they felt when everyone working in the programme had to take turns in taking minutes of the weekly team meeting. This "really threw me when I first had to do them, but we all learn new skills all the time" (CWs, focus group 1). The programme was a challenge for the community workers as they were expected to learn a whole new range of skills which changed and developed alongside the programme changing and developing. They were doing things that: "they never thought they would do" (ibid.) and in visiting parents they described how their experiences also might have influenced parents to do things that they never thought they would do either. "They (the parents) learn new skills and we felt like that as well" (ibid.).

Establishing trust was seen by the community workers as equally important as the services or programmes provided. The community workers described how hard trust was to gain at first:

> You would keep hearing: "My friend said that you are from Social Services". Or "my friend said that you are from Social Services and only here to gain information to take away the children". It was such hard work (CWs, focus group 2).

> It took about a year before mum started to talk to me and the children then started to run up to me, but it took a long time with this family to get to know me (Jo, CW).

However, with persistence, trust was established: “right from the beginning a sense of trust was built up and they (parents) know that we care, that we are doing a job and that is worthwhile” (CWs, focus group 1).

On reflection, the community workers were starting to weave the threads that would connect and interconnect and form a support web, initially for the Greendale Sure Start parents and then progressively for all the residents on the estate. Putnam (2000) describes the ways we can enhance wellbeing by strengthening “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (ibid.). Putnam’s research showed that “in measurable and well-documented ways, social capital makes an enormous difference to our lives” (ibid., p.290). Putnam (2000, p. 288 -290) goes on to assert the importance of “close ties between people in similar situations, such as family and close friends as it builds trust, reciprocity, and a shared sense of belonging and identity”.

I shall now describe in more detail how trust was established between the community workers and the Greendale community, drawing on the interview data.

Engaging mothers

The community workers shared their experiences of engaging mothers in Greendale. Some mothers were unable to access the programme without their support; many felt alone and isolated in Greendale. These mothers often needed several home visits before they had the confidence to access the services provided by Sure Start. Some were so lacking in confidence that they needed to be taken to services by a community worker and initially supported within groups. As one said, “I think it is about building up confidence – the confidence the families have in us and what we can do for them” (CWs, focus group 2).

Mothers who had recently moved into the estate were often isolated and alone and it took months for them, with the support of community workers, to gain the confidence to develop mutually supportive relationships with other mothers. Other mothers, with support, were able to access services and meet other parents and were able to establish effective relationships and become

part of a group of parents who did things together on the estate. One of the community workers explained that:

> It all depends on the individual in the household. If you have an individual who is outgoing they will make sure they make new friends in their street, they will feel confident to speak to each other. But if you've got someone who's never had that interaction with anyone else, and they've been let down, got low self-esteem, they are not even going to make an effort to do that. They are just going to stay in their homes (Barbara, CW).

As a researcher I was particularly interested to study how groups were developed in an area with such a strong history of being atomistic. The community workers were invited to talk about their experiences of groups of parents coming together on Greendale. They did not find this easy to explain; Barbara said, "I don't know how to answer that, really. They just seem to build up relationships, don't they, and friendship. And then they do things outside the building together, through friendship" (Barbara, CW).

Some community workers mentioned how parents came together around a common theme, a school, a group or a course at the Sure Start centre. For instance, Barbara went on to explain that:

> (Parents) tend to have groups if their children are attending the same school or if they have got the same thing in common or they go to the same group within the building. If for instance they all go to the women's group, they tend to have a bond and, when they leave the women's group, they tend to keep that bond. But they are still open to new people that come in (Barbara, CW).

Many of the mothers attending the women's group were experiencing (or had experienced) domestic abuse in their lives (see previous chapter). The women's group provided a safe space for them to talk in confidence and to receive support from other mothers having similar experiences. For many mothers this was liberating as for the first time they were able to share their very private experiences of domestic abuse. This sharing of similar painful and intimate experiences helped mothers to develop a common bond, shared understanding and mutual support. A sense of community is often characterised by 'caring and sharing' among the people

in a community, showing mutual respect, generosity and service to others (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

The community workers emphasised that, through accessing the services and meeting other mothers, mothers found that they were not alone: other mothers were having similar experiences with their children and families and this was reassuring, they were no different from other parents. They shared their common struggles as parents in Greendale and Sure Start provided these opportunities. As Jo explained, "a lot of them are isolated parents, they have said without Sure Start they would not have managed, as they did not know anyone in the area. It has built up friendships from there" (Jo, CW). Community links were strengthened as mothers shared their common experiences. For the first time they now had topics to talk about, that were of common interest to all parents and brought them together. The community workers were there and shared their experiences of working with these parents:

> We had a mum who didn't really go out much and the health visitor was trying to encourage her to go out and it was very difficult for the mum to go out of the house. And we started meeting her and started inviting her along to services and things like that, and to the women's group. And now she joins in a lot of things, she is now actually helping us run the women's group and I did hear today when I rang that she is now going onto a college course as well. I think because you meet people in their homes and you build up that kind of trust with them, then I think it does make a difference (CWs, focus group 1).

The community workers had an opportunity to organise day trips out for the parents and children. This involved organising the transport, the safety seats, the ticket sales, negotiating with the venue personnel, organising the staff cover for the day and also evaluating the day and reporting back to the team meeting. The community workers believed that this sort of event definitely had an impact:

> They see what we have done, that we are normal, working people, they say I would like to do that, I would like to become a community worker, I would like to do that training, they see the educational side and they want to do it, even with the groups we run, a lot of the mums in our

> first groups, those mums are now helping out and running those groups, those new groups (CWs focus group 1).

During the first ten months of the programme, 284 children, (from the 208 families) 14 ante-natal women and 208 families were seen by the community workers and other professionals and these figures increased for the following year to 1285, 120 and 1435 respectively (Sure Start Greendale, 2001-2). Local parents were being engaged and data and local evaluation indicated that over 90% of parents (including mothers and fathers) were involved in some way in the programme (ibid; West et al., 2001).

Engaging fathers

Engaging fathers was an on-going challenge for local Sure Start programmes, as reported in other Sure Start studies (Potter & Carpenter, 2008) and the national evaluation of Sure Start (NESS, 2003). There had never been a focus on fathers' participation in early years prior to Sure Start. One community worker felt that, "It is very difficult to get the dads to change their viewpoint. They think toddler groups is a mother's role, healthy eating and cooking is a mother's role. They are still in the past century. Men talk and think in a very stereotypical way and it is very difficult to break this down" (CWs, focus group 1). Another community worker thought it was challenging, as "some dads work and because it is (services) in the daytime, they see it as a day thing" (ibid.) and not there for them. The community workers thought that the Sure Start centre might be perceived as a female environment, because of its emphasis on childcare (CWs, focus group 2).

> I know there are a lot of men, who just come here for the café and computers, not so much for a group, they just come in. They don't have to be part of a group; they can just come in because the Sure Start building can be viewed as non-threatening. Or they realise when they get in that it is non-threatening and they are quite happy (CWs, focus group 1).

Some fathers stated that they lacked confidence to speak in a group of fathers and they preferred being in a mixed group (with their wife or partner), as then the emphasis was not on them to keep the conversation flowing (CWs, focus group 1; see also Rehal, 2008).

Creating a safe space: the environment

As we have already seen, initially parents had little confidence in Sure Start Greendale. Many had moved to the estate because there was no alternative housing. Apart from the local church hall at one end of the estate where there was a parent and toddler group, there were no meeting places for parents on the estate. The community workers worked in setting up the toy library and the cost price home safety equipment scheme. They helped to provide the first basic skills programme and were running a crèche. As one of them stated, "the services, which have evolved here over time, are parent led, meeting parents' needs, parents' wants and providing services" (CWs, focus group 2). The programme started operating from a small Portakabin, which had been vandalised and was in a bad state of repair. From the time Sure Start took over the building to the time the programme moved out, there was not a single episode of vandalism. During this same time period there were many episodes of vandalism at the school. Sure Start services and staff accommodation were developed as needed in a variety of settings on or near the estate. These services were well received and places on courses were soon full, as the community workers described (CWs, focus group 1), especially as the courses were free (CWs, focus group 2).

During this time, a new building was being planned and delivered (see chapter 6). Parents were taking ownership of the building, as a community worker described: "because there were so many people involved (in the development of the building) if anybody tried to vandalise it, someone who was walking past would say something" (Penny, CW). Three years into the Greendale programme the Sure Start building was finished and in September 2003 the services that were run from a wide range of venues on and near the estate were transferred to the new building. This was a major event in the history of the local estate. It was also the first completed capital Sure Start project in the county. The community workers described the initial sense of disbelief about the building:

> A lot of people in the community thought it would not be delivered. And I think that was one of the major things, because they thought they had tried before to get a community building but weren't successful, and the feeling was you can try but you won't get it.

> Achieving this building sited where it is has put a lot of faith into the parents, I think (CWs, focus group 1).

There was great excitement and anticipation. The building was designed and developed with support from a large number of parents. There was parent representation on the Capital Project group for the building and there were many discussions with parents on the Sure Start management board. As one community worker (who was also a parent) explained: "parents were involved. It wasn't just dumped on us, we were involved, and it wasn't just something done to us. It was something for everybody in the area, not for all the outsiders" (Penny, CW).

The community workers were gaining the confidence of parents and they informed us that the young adults on the estate were told by them "not to touch the Sure Start building" (fieldnotes). One community worker and parent of older children living on the estate reported that, having the new building "felt like a community, it was good" (Barbara, CW). Another commented, "It is a building you can come into and get involved…it's open to anybody" (Jo, CW). There was now a place for parents to meet, somewhere for parents to go, and where parents could talk. As the community workers emphasised, they were providing a space for parents and children and staff to connect. Sure Start Greendale, the building, the community workers and the whole Sure Start team were supporting the development of social capital (Putnam, 2000).

The new building had additional space and many new services could be developed. Some were now a requirement of Sure Start nationally and some were planned to meet identified local needs. The new building had a 50-place day-care facility for children less than five years, a crèche, an after-school and holiday club, a community café, a small shop and services from the local primary care trust, including speech and language and a community paediatrician. As one community worker commented, "Even if people don't come to any groups, they come into the café and make friends" (CWs, interview 1). The established partnership with the Greendale Allotment Project was now within a few hundred metres of the new building. The community workers believed the building had a major impact on the community, with the café at its heart:

> I think it has made a huge difference. I think the community has come together more; people are talking together, they are meeting up, they are making friends. I think having the café has been a focal point for the estate because lots of parents, that is the first place where they tend to meet, the caff… I think without the café you would lose a lot of the community spirit, because that is where they tend to meet (Barbara, CW).

> The café …because they (Mums) meet there and that is a lovely meeting place and they can come there to suss the building out… Just by coming into the building is an achievement for some of them and going out of their front door. They make friends and build bonds (Jo, CW).

There were other changes on the estate. The council had undertaken a programme to improve the rented accommodation. Flats and houses were redecorated, central heating was installed, and windows were replaced with double-glazed units. Local garages next to the flats, which were an on-going source of friction for local residents, were demolished. A zebra crossing was installed in front of the Sure Start building as part of the capital development. Traffic calming initiatives were also introduced on some of the main roads on the estate. The community workers talked about "noticing a lift in the estate…it doesn't seem so run down. Money has been put into it and maybe if they are attributing that to Sure Start being here, that's great" (CWs, focus group 1).

Community workers commented on the increased level of confidence in parents: for example, "parents feel able to say actually I want this" (CWs, interview 1); "it is because they know us, we are not booted and suited, they don't feel threatened" (Penny, CW). Parents had talked to community workers and one said that, "if it wasn't for Sure Start this or that wouldn't have happened, (and) I'd never speak to another adult if I didn't have Sure Start or I wouldn't be here now" (CWs, focus group 1). Later on in the history of the programme, a community worker who had worked for six years on the estate had received a "letter from a parent who had moved onto Greendale because of the Sure Start children's centre" (Penny, CW). Two other families "who had moved away (from Greendale) have actually come back and another is planning to return, yes because of Sure Start". She thought there was "now more of a community and in the last few years there has been a difference" (Penny, CW).

One community worker who had moved into the estate ten years earlier thought that everything had changed for the better over the previous six years. She mentioned that the council had upgraded the windows, the doors and the central heating in all the flats on the estate (Barbara, CW). Residents were now maintaining their front gardens better than before and people were now talking to each other.

> From a personal point of view, I just think the whole area has changed. It has become better. Well, I have seen loads of improvements…It has become a friendlier place. When I moved here ten years ago, we didn't talk to the people opposite our road. You just never spoke to them. It wasn't a friendly place. You came out of your door. You did your school run. You went home. But now everyone seems to talk to each other (Barbara, CW).

> [Greendale] has definitely got more of a community spirit now. It is more of a community together (Jo, CW).

Building community

Sure Start Greendale, in the context of Greendale, saw itself as critically conscious of the reality of people's lives on the estate and sought, through the delivery of the programme; to provide an alternative and better experience for parents and children. Through its activities, its manner of interaction and relationships, it sought to build social capital in the Greendale area (Putnam, 2000). The community workers were key to engaging the local parents and the challenges they faced at the beginning of the programme were immense, as we have seen, overcoming initial parental mistrust.

There was substantial evidence to show mothers, prior to Sure Start not being able to access services or develop even the most basic of relationships with other mothers on the estate (Kesby, 2000; West et al., 2001). Now there was evidence that ninety percent of parents were accessing services or receiving home visits (Sure Start Greendale, 2001-2). Through the research process I was able to ascertain that of those in the ten percent, many were either moving in or moving out of the estate, some had family members living on the estate and felt they did not need Sure Start, and others had bad experiences with social services and did not want to engage with Sure Start. Parental friendships on the estate were explored with the community workers. Six years on from

the start of the Sure Start programme, were there any signs of change? Were parents now able to establish friendships with other parents on the estate? Were parents getting together and doing things together? Barbara, one of the community workers, shared her views:

> That's hard to answer, because you have got different pockets on the estate. There are families who are separate, individual, who won't join in anything. It must be something to do with their upbringing, or they don't have the confidence to mix with others, or they have had friends that have let them down in the past, so they don't feel confident to interact with other adults. So, they tend to do things on their own. And then you have got these other families on the estate, who meet up in groups, in big groups, and you have them coming in for services. But they seem to be the more confident parents who feel they can do that. You've got the vulnerable parents who tend to be on their own and they don't tend to mix (Barbara, CW).

The community workers explained that the building of relationships between parents on the estate was multi-factorial. There was the issue of the length of time parents lived on the estate and where they lived on the estate. There were also issues around why they moved to the estate and the circumstances around their move, "Nine times out of ten why they are put there is because they've been in a relationship and it's broken down, so the Council have rehoused them there. Nine times out of ten people don't want to be put there" (Barbara, CW).

The community workers discussed the changes that they had seen in Greendale since the start of the Sure Start programme. They talked about the start of the programme and Greendale being very quiet, with little interaction between parents and also between parents and their children. They described how parents living on Greendale did not associate themselves with the estate, at least in part because of the mix of families, as one community worker explained:

> And we have seen mixtures of different backgrounds and families and dynamics at the centre and because they are not aware of each other's history, unless they give away what they want to tell each other, then they are all starting from the same benchmark, regardless of history, because they don't know each other's history (CWs, focus group 1).

The community workers held the view that six years earlier, prior to Sure Start Greendale "there wasn't much of a community" (Penny CW interview). Things were changing as the programme developed. Most parents, often with the support and encouragement of the community workers, were now confident to leave their homes, go to the Sure Start centre and participate in activities planned and often delivered by the same community workers. "Now it is more neighbourly; people are looking out for each other. They are watching out for vandals, they are watching out for each other" (Jo, CW). Parents were attending groups and services together in the centre, as well as in adjoining spaces such as the allotment: "There is a community spirit with the allotment and the amount of people that have joined that: older people, children, disabled people" (Jo, CW):

> People are meeting up, they are chatting and they do want to know what is going on in their local area. I think it has become more, and they have their say. They want their say. They want to feel important. I believe it is more of a community now (Barbara, CW).

The community workers described how parents were gaining confidence. Those who attended Sure Start no longer felt isolated and alone, as they came to realise that their experiences of being a parent in Greendale were not unique to them but shared by many other parents on the estate. The community workers thought that this new understanding of their lives compared with others in the estate was reassuring and emancipating.

Community workers also reported about families who did not always participate in groups, but attended the centre and came into the community café and made friends. Attendance at the centre was increasing and more parents were coming together, "even if they just come for lunch, or to one of the groups, they are building friendships aren't they"? (Penny CW interview). One community worker thought that:

> each individual's social network has widened because they are all interconnected, or starting to interconnect. More people know more people and they are also seeing each other out of here (the children's centre). They are acknowledging each other and that is the difference. It spreads from the centre going off (CWs, focus group 1).

This was particularly interesting to me as a researcher. I was hearing from the community workers that now practically everybody was speaking to each other on the estate, which was a

complete contrast to what we heard was happening prior to Sure Start. The community workers reflected on those early days of Sure Start and what we did as a programme that was different. How did we get a community talking, if this is what they were telling me happened? One said:

> Yes, I think we listened to parents about what they want and we actually acted on what they want. So, they began to believe in something, rather than: "Oh, no, no, no, it's not going to work" (Barbara, CW).

In addition, the parents were encouraged to participate actively in the community and the running of Sure Start itself:

> Having the Management Board has helped as well. People have wanted to join that and that is for ordinary people, that is what I mean, you don't have to be super talented, it is for ordinary people. People can join in, there is so much going on…It has definitely built up the community (Jo, CW).

The community workers considered this kind of active engagement crucial to the sense of community which had been fostered:

> They are proud now of where they live. They are not ashamed anymore to say that I live on [Greendale]. They are taking more of an active role and standing up and saying this is who we are and this is where we are from. This is what we've got and you haven't. They want to be part of things (CWs, focus group 1).

Reflecting on their roles

The community workers discussed their role and how it was different from anything they had done before. They sensed that certain professionals work in one way but as community workers "you are an all-rounder" (CWs, focus group 1). They were able to change to suit the situation and the environment they found themselves in, but they were still able to "keep within that whole" (ibid.). They felt that they had grown and developed in Sure Start, as one explained: "whereas in some jobs before I started here, a couple of people felt quite stifled, whereas at Sure Start you are allowed to explore and work it out for yourself, your confidence grows" (Penny CW interview). The community workers felt that they were learning all the time, gaining new

skills and, “you think gosh I am actually doing that” (CWs, focus group 1). They moved on to something new when they had mastered one task: “You are always learning” (ibid.).

There was considerable evidence from the interviews that the community workers had played a major role in bringing about change in the Greendale estate. Reflecting on their own role, they felt they had played “a big, a huge part” (Barbara, CW) in affecting change for parents, acting as a “boost” (ibid.) for parents, giving them confidence to come and use the Sure Start services and changing “a lot of families lives for the better” (ibid.). Barbara acknowledged that “you are not going to change everyone” but believed that they played a big part in it. Another community worker said,

> I would see community workers, as I have always said, as the drivers using the engine to drive our programme. You go out and talk with parents. You bring parents into the programme, you support parents in accessing and when they are able to do that you don’t create dependency (CWs, focus group 2).

How were they able to affect change with local parents? The community workers reported aspects like “being at their level (parents)” (Barbara, CW) and also attributed their personality traits of being “friendly, honest, open, telling them everything” (ibid.) as important in helping to gain the parents’ trust:

> I think it has because we go out to visit people we get to know the people and they trust us. They are more relaxed because you are going into their homes. And they tell you what they want, they talk to you, they tell you about the things they want (Barbara CW).

The community workers attributed their success in engaging parents to their open approach and to their attitudes towards parents. They felt they were “really we are non–judgemental, non-threatening and we are invited to go into that person’s house, we are privileged to go into their house” (CWs, focus group 1). They also thought that the way they asked questions of parents was important; as was the way they promoted the children’s centres as being “their centre”. As parents from the community themselves, they perhaps had a different approach from other professionals:

> And we haven't come from a statutory background where they are a bit set in their ways and the way they work. We have come and put feelers out, so in a way perhaps they change the way they work, to fit in with what we do. So that has got to impact well on their side, as well as on ours (CWs, focus group 1).

The community workers described how important it was for them not to "make unrealistic promises (to parents), to be honest, friendly and non-threatening" and be "empathetic without being patronising" (CWs, focus group 1). They also described how important it was for people to trust you: "right from the beginning a sense of trust was built up and they know that we care, that we are doing the job and that it is worthwhile" (ibid.). Jo emphasised the importance of build(ing) a bond" with parents:

> You know some of these people have been let down a lot from one thing to another, so they do need that continuity. They need to know that somebody is going to be there, that that person is going to be there for a while, and that they care, that they are going to be there for them (Jo, CW).

The community workers discussed the impact on parents in Greendale of the failure in the past of local agencies to deliver the promised secondary school and community centre, and the importance of overcoming parents' scepticism. They also thought that they did not need to be an expert and if parents had a query and they did not have the answer, they were confident to tell the parents that they would find out for them:

> I think we are also pretty aware of what we do and our own limitations and we are honest with parents and if we can't actually help support them, we can support them in accessing outside (services), such as counselling or things like that. We actually support them through the process of seeking referral elsewhere. We openly sit with them and do the referral and follow them through and support them with that (CWs, focus group 2).

Now parents were really pleased because Sure Start had delivered "this big visual thing (children's centre) which has happened so they have faith when we talk about the smaller aspects

of delivery" (CWs, focus group 1). The large highly visible building was there as evidence that Sure Start had made promises which they were able to keep and this was a new experience for local parents. The community workers were also part of this promise in relation to service delivery and they were delivering what parents wanted.

The community workers stated that now they cannot "walk in the community and not see someone – ten yards maybe – and not smile or say hello. Now they are acknowledging you whereas at the beginning it was head down and not looking" (CWs, focus group 1). They put this down to their collective strengths as a team:

> As individuals I think we are brilliant. I think as a community worker team we all have different strengths and weaknesses, so put us together and we make an even stronger one, stronger than what we do as individuals (CWs, focus group 1).

The community workers were familiar with the research process and interested in taking part in my research. They were taking on many new roles within the programme. They were keen to talk about their role and their experiences. They had helped me set up the programme and were aware of the major role they played in engaging the local parents. Researching the community worker role was affirmation of their importance and this affirmation was strengthened by the researcher also being the director. The community workers had little opportunity in their previous roles to talk about what they did. Sure Start Greendale and the research study were very different experiences for them. They mentioned the research study during team meetings and some expressed anxiety at the initial thought of taking part, but they embraced it like they had done with so many other new and different experiences within the Sure Start Greendale programme. They all continued being part of the research. On reflection the community workers grew in self-confidence as they developed an effective outreach home visiting service and then a range of group activities within the children's centre. Their self-confidence could have been strengthened by taking part in my research study and Letherby (1997) identified that people who have felt supported by others in a particular situation go on to offer support themselves; however further research would need to be undertaken to explore this issue in more depth in relation to the community workers. The new experiences and constant demands on the community worker

role were very apparent to me and the need for regular supervision, regular team meetings and the "emerging team being held together" (Rehal, 2008) especially the community workers, were foremost in my thinking.

Managing anxiety and other emotions was a major consideration in the Sure Stat Greendale programme. Community workers and other staff members were visiting families and identifying a wide range of issues in the estate. They discussed with me the high levels of unmet need including social isolation, domestic abuse, debt, child abuse, behaviour problems with children, lack of support, teenage pregnancies and others. These issues were acknowledged on a formal basis during team meetings, and management supervision sessions and also on an informal basis during one to one meetings. Staff were aware that they were not alone in coping with the stressful situations they encountered. They were also supported with any anxieties relating to research participation. I listened and became aware that some of these experiences also resonated for them in relation to their private lives. I was particularly aware that I needed to ensure the community workers, three of whom lived on the Greendale estate, felt well supported. My open door policy for staff support was frequently used. I was also proactive in meeting with community workers following particular incidents on the estate. I talked through issues of concern with them and frequently reassured them that they were doing very valuable work. I was aware of the power differential between myself and the community workers and ensured that they could also access additional support from a senior health professional. Accessible informal support, scheduled supervision sessions, appraisals, personal and professional development were all part of team development in Sure Start Greendale.

I now turn to an individual community worker's account which is presented and discussed in more detail. All quotes are from the first interview with Liz; space does not permit a discussion of the second interview, which focused on education. Liz was recruited as a community worker early in the Sure Start Greendale programme. She had lived on the state for one year when she was eleven years old and had returned and lived there for the ten years prior to the Sure Start programme. She was a single parent and had two teenagers who attended local primary and secondary schools. Liz had a deep knowledge of the estate and the challenges faced by residents.

She was interested in sharing her experiences of the changes that she had observed on the estate over the six years that she had worked as a community worker.

Liz

Liz stated that visually the area had changed and improved and fences had been erected to separate the garden areas so people had a safe space of their own. Liz sensed that, as the gardens became more secure, people saw their gardens as becoming safer and becoming "their patch". Sure Start Greendale had contributed to the improvements, because "we are putting money in by having this building". As a resident herself, Liz thought that the benefits of Sure Start Greendale included bringing "ownership and a sense of community…socially relationships are building up among families that have been isolated…and the services we provide has actually opened doors for people". That Sure Start was seen as a non-means tested service was important in Liz's view, as there was "no stigma attached to coming here".

Liz noted that when people now said they came from Greendale, they "don't say it in what I would call the downturn mouth way - 'Oh I come from there. It is the last stopping place, there is nowhere else to go' – it is not that sort of feeling anymore". Parents were now "quite proud that they have got this (Sure Start) here". She noted that parents who were moving away asked the community workers to research whether there was a Sure Start programme where they were going to, which she saw as "a symbol of our success…so we are making a difference".

In discussing the increased sense of community on the estate, Liz highlighted the importance of the adult education courses, as well as the services offered by Sure Start. In particular, Liz commented on the changes she had seen in how parents related to their children: rather than seeing them as "whirling dervishes who scream and shout…I feel that they are enjoying the children". In contrast to the lack of self-esteem that parents had previously had, she noted: "I think with us being here we have perhaps opened their eyes and they have taken, I think they are taking a bit of pride in themselves and what they can achieve". She explained further the way in which she thought this positive effect spread in the community:

> I think…it starts with yourself. You are getting a greater sense of self, aren't you? That rebounds on your family because if you are feeling better about yourself, your family, life is

> better and that then gives you pride in yourself, your family and your home and that then stretches out to neighbours. You have pride in where you live and a recognition that I couldn't have got to where I am now without the support of the children's centre and those who work there (Liz, interview 1).

Although Liz was talking about the parents on the estate, she spoke very emotionally, and related this to her own former position, when "I lived in a flat in Roberts Avenue 24 years ago, and there was nothing, nothing".

Liz saw herself as a "foot soldier on the front line going out spreading the message" in her role as a community worker. This image had a mix of military and evangelical connotations. She described in detail how she engaged hard to reach, often angry parents: "you pick the spark up and you talk"; she also gave parents an "instant massage" by enabling them to "turn off the modern world" with all its demands and focus on their own interests and needs for a short while. In a vivid analogy of growth, she described the way that Sure Start and the community workers developed this way of working:

> It is like a tree, you have got the main truck which is this building, and then you have got the branches which is the members of staff and then you have got the other branches coming off of that, which is us (community workers). Yes? But they are all connected and one couldn't work without the others. You take one away and the others bits would fail (Liz, interview 1).

Liz extended the analogy by explaining that: "You have the roots underneath which are embedded with the principles, the aims and objectives of what we are and then each bit is as collectively important as the others". She saw the "leaves are families and they come and grow…It's a bit flowery; a funny way of putting it, but it's a way of describing that one can't succeed without the other. You need the whole package". This was a very powerful description, which emphasised Liz's view of the inter-connectedness of all aspects of Sure Start, the community workers and their relationships with families, helping to build the whole community. Liz's great commitment to the programme also came through in the way she talked.

Following discussion with Liz about particularly difficult experiences on the Greendale estate which involved local individuals and families, which she described confidentially, she highlighted the strengths of the Sure Start Greendale team in relation to how the team handled these very difficult events and how they supported each other: "What a team we are and how we do work so closely together and we are there for each other". Liz valued the supervision that was in place for the community workers within the programme, but she also valued the more casual support that was available when needed, from her colleagues, "who you can just turn to and say, 'Look have you just got five minutes?'" Liz saw this as a great strength of the team and that "as a team we are really strong. As individuals we are strong, we know our role and what we are doing, but as a team we are actually stronger". She described how the children's centre "building and the people who work in it actually give you strength" when she was out visiting families on her own. She also knew that she could call on different people from the wider team of professionals: "health, education, social services, anything like that if you need them. There is no rigmarole…no bureaucracy". Liz's repetition of the word 'team' emphasised the importance that she placed on the way that people worked with each other within the programme, and the value of both the formal and informal support mechanisms available to the community workers.

At the end of the interview, she returned to her own position, not only as a community worker, but as a parent herself.

> I mean I am a parent off the estate, you know how I feel about this, I am a parent off the estate. I have got my job. I am a community worker who happens to be a parent, I think, and because I value my role here, I value my role as a parent, don't get me wrong, but I value my role here and I don't mind if I am a community worker who happens to be a parent, but I just think if I am a parent who is a community worker for some reason to me, I know it doesn't (matter) to certain other people here, but to me in some ways it almost devalues my expertise as a community worker. I don't know if that makes sense. I have a sense of the community because I live here and how it works, but I also value my role (Liz, interview 1).

I have quoted in full here, because Liz seemed to be working out her own positioning and self-identity in the way she talked. She started by asserting with feeling her identity as a parent, but

ended by affirming her role as a community worker. She confirmed that she preferred to be seen as a community worker on balance, because, "Being someone who lives on the estate, sometimes it is a bit too close to home…it is quite challenging." This was the first time that Liz had acknowledged the challenges involved in balancing her dual identity; up to this point she had just been asserting the value of this twofold position, perhaps an indication of wanting to appear positive in the interview. This was very revealing about how community workers who were also mothers (Liz, Barbara and Penny) had to balance their dual positions and roles.

Auto/biographical narratives

On reviewing the data sets across the auto/biographical narratives with community worker Liz, local parents (chapter 8) and partner agency representatives (chapter 9) there was evidence of a range of key issues that impacted on people's lives and experiences. These included; a deep mistrust of professionals, social isolation (chapter 8), education experiences and the need for a local secondary school (chapter 8), early involvement in Sure Start (chapter 8), challenges of partnership working (Chapter 9), outreach community worker visits (chapter 8) and accessing Sure Start courses and other services. Many of these issues have been discussed in some detail in the thesis in relation to other data sets in chapters 7, 8 and 9; however some further analysis was undertaken to strengthen and deepen the understanding of these key issues.

Mistrust of professionals

There was evidence from across the auto/biographical narratives of an ongoing dialogue of mistrust of professionals and local statutory organisations. Liz, an experienced community worker who lived in Greendale stated without any further clarification that "everyone knows that families have a suspicion of professionals". She stated that it would be "very difficult to get the programme off the ground if it was professionally led". By positioning herself and the other community workers as non-professionals she reinforced their strengths of "openness" and having a "firm grounding in the community". Adele's experience (chapter eight) as a parent valued the role of community workers as without them there would be no effective outreach programme and "you wouldn't have people to encourage others to come in". She felt that her community worker unlike some professionals was right there with her, encouraging and supporting and allowing her space to make her own decisions. She felt that the community workers were "easy going, easy to talk to and non- judgemental". She did not feel judged and this enabled her to have the

confidence to access other services in the programme. Beth (chapter nine) the retired health professional describes how “awfully difficult” it was to engage people in Greendale. A local initiative funded by social services was not successful as you “could not get people (to attend)”, “people were so suspicious”. Beth explained that people on Greendale “did not have much power to start with” as there was not a mix of people in the housing stock, there was “the same sort of groups that pulled one another down, there was nothing to bring people up”. While Beth acknowledged that people in Greendale lacked power and resources her comments were still implicitly judgemental in the way she described the downward spiral of behaviour. Beth goes on to describe the strength of feeling of local residents and the level of suspicion towards social workers and the local council. Joan (chapter nine) a member of the management board recalls the tensions within the partnership and the lack of trust of professionals and the many challenges of the consultation process in a community with little trust in local organisations to deliver. She also proposed that people need to feel safe whether it is in their homes, in school or on the street otherwise they will not interact with others or participate in any activities. She highlights that there was mistrust because in the past the county and district councils had made promises and they were not delivered. Parents were not cynical but they were sceptical and mistrustful but they also had hoped that maybe this time something would be delivered.

On reviewing the literature there is evidence to support mistrust of professionals and on investigating aspects of community psychology, social exclusion and the role of social capital there is evidence to support that in neighbourhoods like Greendale with a long history of chronic under resourcing and many unfulfilled promises, high crime levels, graffiti and a general unkempt appearance, there are high levels of fear and mistrust (Ross et al., 2000). People may fear leaving the house; they may fear that their house will not be safe if they do go out. They may conclude that people cannot be trusted and become suspicious and see people as being out to harm them. Mistrust can be perceived as a lack of faith in other people. “It is the cognitive habit of interpreting the intentions and behaviour of others as unsupportive, self-seeking, and dishonest (Mirowsky et al., 1983). Research shows that people with children in their house are considerably more fearful than those without children (Ross et al., 2000). There is evidence from parents in Greendale that many felt unsafe living on the estate and as all these parents had young children they would be more aware of the need to protect their children and keep them safe. The

literature highlights the importance of trust in relation to the quality and effectiveness of participation by local residents and other partners in relation to regeneration initiatives. One of the main influences on the development of mistrust within neighbourhoods is related to relationships between residents and professionals who are viewed as outsiders and local agencies especially local councils (Hibbitt et al., 2001). Mistrust is seen as a major obstacle to participation. “Trust is fundamental to effective interpersonal relationships and community living” (Mechanic et al., 2000 p. 657). Thus a decline in trust can lead to exaggerated vigilance and continuous general anxiety. On Greendale residents had experiences of many consultations and promises of change which had not materialised.

Earlier experiences of working on Greendale are covered in chapter 4 and the particular incident of a local organisation refusing to lend the programme an electric kettle so that we could have tea for planned visitors to the programme became particularly pertinent. The literature suggests that where there is mistrust there is a lack of social ties and this was evident in Greendale. The lack of support from a local statutory organisation that felt unable to lend an electric kettle for a short period of time was evidence of this. Informal alliances and supportive ties where “people help each other out by having informal chats, visits to each other’s homes, helping each other out, or lend each other things” (Ross et al., 2000) help people deal with oppressive environments and reduce the risks of harassment and victimisation. There was also evidence of the local school being unable to support Sure Start Greendale in providing accommodation during half term to host the official launch of the programme. Parents requested that Sure Start services be removed from the school and delivered at the local scout hut was further evidence of the mistrust of professionals. How some local providers behaved was seen as very much part of the problem where local parents experienced this culture of organisations “not being prepared to give”. There was evidence of a discourse of mistrust in Greendale at all levels at the early stages of the Sure Start Greendale programme. The programme addressed this by recruiting and training community workers to undertake outreach home visits to families and to start the process of building trust and community, this was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Accessing courses and other services

Accessing course and services was not easy for many parents. Sue clearly articulated how daunted she felt after signing up for the computer course. She decided to herself that she

would go to one session and then not go again. When she attended the First Aid course she thought that she would not be able to cope as she did not know anybody. The hands on approach with two people working together undertaking mouth to mouth resuscitation on a mannequin helped break the ice. She thought it was quite funny and laughed. During these courses Sue realised that she was not alone, there were many mothers feeling isolated and lacking confidence in caring for children on their own. When she accessed the second course and realised that mothers from the previous course were also on this course she relaxed. Sue was gaining experiences, gaining in self-confidence, successfully completing courses and awarded certificates. She started to develop relationships with other mothers, and in doing so she realised that she shared many common experiences with most of the other mothers in Greendale. Adele's experience of accessing courses and other services is discussed in chapter 8. Joan in chapter 9 emphasises the importance of out-reach community worker visits in communities like Greendale.

The data clearly shows that some mothers had great difficulty accessing Sure Start courses and other services. The data indicates that Sure Start Greendale responded effectively by developing an out-reach community worker role and by working closely with parents in developing and delivering a range of services that were valued and accessed by parents.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the roles of the community workers in the Sure Start programme, from their inception through to their later development, have been charted with particular reference to the community workers' interviews. The chapter has described how the original title of "befriender", a universal service provision for young families on Greendale, was rejected by local parents. They did not like the title and thought that as the service was only available to local parents it was stigmatising. Great thought and care was taken in the drafting of the new job description and the new title which would eventually be 'community worker'. Four community workers were recruited and three of these were parents who lived on Greendale, importantly, they helped set up the programme in a grass roots way.

The role of the community workers was key to engaging a very sceptical and disillusioned community. They identified particular strengths in the way that they had gained the trust of

initially suspicious parents, through being approachable, available and non-judgmental. The interview evidence shows how the community workers engaged with local mothers and to a lesser extent, fathers. They worked with parents, gradually beginning to undertake home visits, and over time and with "our persistence" (Liz, CW) trust was established. The community workers reported that parents "know that we care" (CWs, focus group 1) and this helped with the building up of confidence. The community workers thought that, through accessing services and hearing the experiences of other parents, parents realised they were not alone, but found they had common topics for discussion and shared common struggles with other parents.

The community workers talked about the new building and how Greendale now felt like a community. The building provided a space for parents, children and staff to connect. The community workers noted "a lift in the estate" (CWs, focus group 1) with the development of Sure Start. A detailed study of Liz's perceptions both as a community worker and as a parent living on the Greendale estate provides a deeper insight into the way that the Sure Start team operated and how the Greendale estate had changed as a result.

A cross cutting thematic approach to the analysis of the auto/biographical narratives of parents, community workers and partner agency representatives was undertaken and themes identified and some of these were explored in this chapter while others will be investigated fully in chapters 8 and 9.

In relation to Clark's (1996) model, the focal task of the community workers can be seen as binding together different elements in the social system and helping to give focus and direction. This focal task did not change, but the emphasis varied as the community workers' roles shifted and changed over time. There is substantial evidence that the community workers were key to the development of social capital (Baron et al., 2000; Putnam, 2000; Schuller, 2000), in an area where there were immense challenges in engaging local parents at the start of the programme.

Important methodological questions to raise here are whether the community workers' own accounts provide reliable evidence and whether my own involvement and power position in the Sure Start programme affected what they told me. As their line manager, I have to recognise that

they may have been telling me what I wanted to hear. These methodological questions have been discussed earlier in chapter 5 within the context of the trustworthiness of my research. However, the enthusiasm and power of their views and ways that they were expressed are strong positive indicators, and evidence from my own experience can also corroborate much of what they said. The independent evaluations of Greendale also support the claims made by the community workers (West et al., 2001, 2003). Nevertheless, in order to substantiate further some of the claims raised in this chapter, it is important to set this evidence in the context of interviews with parents, which are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Parents' Perspectives

"Home is where one starts from"

(T.S. Eliot 1943)

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of parents' perspectives on a range of issues, including moving into the estate, isolation, loss, developing relationships, engaging with Sure Start and the community workers and issues relating to local secondary schools, drawing on the semi-structured interviews and focus group interview. It goes on to trace the experiences of two mothers who lived in the estate for many years, highlighted in individual auto/biographical narrative accounts. Both mothers moved to Greendale before the Sure Start Programme began and remained there throughout the period of the research.

The perspectives of parents were initially drawn from the seven parents, six mothers and a father, as well as a later focus group interview with four other parents (see chapter 5 for details). For the purpose of analysis the data are arranged to reflect the general area of questioning, for example all data relating to parents' perceptions of the role of community workers is collated. Other emerging themes included: participants' relationships and social networks in Greendale, feelings towards Greendale after Sure Start had been established, and effects on the community. These data sets are summarised, analysed and commented on in relation to parents' views, using Clark's model of community (1996) and Gaventa's (1980) model of power and powerlessness as helpful guides in analysing the respective categories. Clark (p. 42) outlines three essential components: a sense of solidarity, of significance and of security; I have analysed the data using these three main headings. The cross cutting thematic analysis of the auto/biographical narratives of the mothers, Sue and Adele, Liz the community worker and partner agency representatives, Beth, Fiona and Joan identify social isolation, educational experiences and the need for a local secondary school and early involvement in Sure Start is addressed towards the end of this chapter.

Moving into Greendale: isolation

As we have seen in chapters 4 and 7, many parents living in Greendale had not chosen to live there and many initially had very negative views of the estate. As Barbara (CW and parent) stated, "It had this big stigma. Greendale oh my god, that's the last place you want to live". Most were rehoused in Greendale as their family size grew, though some had lived on the estate prior to the new development in 1974. Parents told me they would prefer not to live on Greendale but were not given an alternative from the housing department. One mother reported: "I do not want to be here [on Greendale], as people look down on you, it's not somewhere people want to live" (semi-structured interview). Another mother told me that in the past,

> People wouldn't write down that they live on Greendale, they would put [the name of the local seaside town] … This has now changed, I don't think this happens now (Semi-structured interview).

This mother was articulating the changes she had observed over the life of the Sure Start programme. The sense of isolation was mentioned frequently. One parent told me:

> I lived next door to Kerry for five year and two to three years ago she would not even speak to me. And now she comes into the building and has had a complete turn around and now there she is knocking on the door every day. Her confidence is easily ten times as much (Parents' focus group).

Again, this was perceived to have changed considerably since the development of Sure Start. Even when parents did meet they lacked a common history. They had moved to Greendale from many different geographical areas, there was no history of working or studying together after leaving school and their children attended different schools. A mother engaging with Sure Start told me:

> There wasn't a lot on here [Greendale]…if you needed to do anything, you needed to go out of the area to find the source, there wasn't really a sense of community, it was very fragmented, very disjointed (Semi-structured interview).

> There were high levels of single mothers with young children on the estate. There were few services on the estate and there was no community, as in a place for everyone to meet (Semi-structured interview).

One mother, who had been rehoused on Greendale following a family crisis, described her changing feelings about Greendale:

> Oh I used to hate it. I wouldn't let my kids out to play. I was petrified of the area. I didn't know what people were like. I stayed in (and) kept the children locked in the back garden (semi-structured interview).

Another mother who was housed on Greendale due to challenging domestic circumstances had felt unable to leave her home on Greendale as she was frightened of the local children, but said that Sure Start had made things, "A lot better, (I'm) more confident, (I) know more parents, know the local children, have gained their respect. (Now I'm) used to parents and children, it's a lot better" (semi-structured interview). One interviewee described Greendale in the past as "a total heap, a lot of crime … but crime has gone down since the (Sure Start) building was here" (semi-structured interview). All these mothers were reporting significant change to their attitudes to and experiences of the area since the development of Sure Start.

Parents' views on community workers

On reviewing the data about community workers, there is evidence that parents shared feelings on a range of issues. All participants reported that they knew their community worker and had met her, as one explained: "I had this two year-old daughter and within a few weeks of moving into my new house, the community worker Penny turned up on my doorstep" (parents' focus group). One participant did not have a community worker (she lived off the estate), but her two children and her ex-partner did have a community worker as they lived on the estate.

As reported by the community workers themselves in the previous chapter, the parents stated that there was initially mistrust of the community workers, because they associated them with social workers: "A lot of people on [Greendale] mistrust social workers big time. There is a stigma that comes with it" (parents' focus group). Another said, "You feel you have to be a bad parent if a social worker is involved" (ibid.). However, the way that the community workers operated allayed the parents' concerns:

> When the community workers first started coming out I know there was a lot of distrust of them, but they were such good people and the patience they had with us was unreal and they won everybody over (Parents' focus group).

Another parent also described the way the community workers related to them, "What I found on the first visit I had, it wasn't just what we can do for you, it was 'what would you like us to do for you'?", (Parents' focus group); this was surprising given her previous experiences with professionals.

The parents valued the social support given to them by community workers, access to information about Greendale such as finding out about courses, and specific support, for instance helping them to break through bureaucratic systems. Parents also valued help with their children and more widely their positive impact in bringing the community together. Easy access to community workers was valued by all the parents. Overall, there was only one example of negative feedback about a community worker.

Social support: building security

On reviewing the data in relation to security and the role of community workers, there is evidence of the community workers playing a substantial part in social support, thus enabling participants to feel a stronger sense of security (Clark, 1996; Jennings, 1992). The term 'very supportive' was frequently used. One participant stated that her community worker, "got me into Sure Start and (helped me) meet other mums, giving me a more stable life" (semi-structured interview). Another parent stated that their community worker "has helped me to settle in the area" (semi-structured interview). Both of these examples show, the mothers' positive view of their community worker related to their help in settling in Greendale and feeling a part of the community. Participants' need for such support was a powerful theme throughout the interview data.

Social support from the community workers was constantly expressed as a positive aspect in the responses. One participant explained that, "if I have a problem there is always somebody to speak to," (semi-structured interview), while another stated, "I feel like I can come in and talk to her at any time about anything" (semi-structured interview). Two respondents recorded that the

community worker was supportive through her "listening skills". One mother received support with "domestic violence", which was perceived as "a great help" (semi-structured interviews). One mother who was also looking after her granddaughter reported:

> They (community workers) sorted me out for everything I needed. Liz started to come round every week or two weeks because I needed the extra support at that point (Parents' focus group).

There is therefore substantial evidence from the participants that community workers were able to identify the parents' needs and work with them in addressing those needs.

Confidence building was frequently mentioned: for example, one participant reported that her community worker was "helping me with my confidence" (semi-structured interview), while another recorded, "Penny was my community worker. When I had my baby, she came round to my house and brought me out of myself. And now I never shut up!" (Parents' focus group). She continued "(She has) brought people together, all parents are able to meet in a friendly safe environment without the worry of drugs or alcohol" (semi-structured interview). More than one parent commented that the community workers "brought the community together" (semi-structured interview). These examples of participant experiences evidence what Clark (1996) termed solidarity, significance and security.

However, one respondent reported that her community worker was "not supportive when I needed them most. The community worker did not want to talk about my recent marriage split as another mother on the estate was involved" (semi-structured interview). I had been made aware of the incident as it had caused great distress within the Sure Start Greendale team and also impacted on the atmosphere within the Children's Centre building. However, I was not aware of the families involved until I talked with one of the research participants while completing the exploratory interviews. This issue raised one of the many challenges faced by community workers in situations where there was a conflict of interest.

Access to information and advice: building significance

Easy access to community workers was important to the parents. Participants knew that many of the community workers were parents from the estate and, when asked if they saw this as positive, all thought that it was an advantage. Comments from parents included: "They know the area, know the community issues and problems" (semi-structured interview); "they know what is needed because they live in the area, they are insiders" (semi-structured interview); "they would understand the difficulties of living on the estate" (semi-structured interview); "You don't have to explain that doesn't happen in this area because they always know…She knew because she lived here" (parents' focus group).

Participants identified how they used the support, advice and expertise of community workers to enable them to cope with official situations too. Examples of these included sorting out a hospital referral letter, registering for courses and also accessing services at the children's centre. The advice and information provided by a community worker to one parent enabled her to start a course locally which led on to later employment. The interviews revealed that community workers were willing to go the extra mile to help:

> I wanted help and she came and got me because I never went out…She was willing on the first day of my course to actually go with me from the front door to the place where it was (Parents' focus group).

For a group who generally reported feeling powerless (Gaventa, 1980), the help of community workers enhanced their feelings of significance (Clark, 1996). Most participants were positive about the difference the community workers made on the Greendale estate. For instance, one parent said: "Penny and Liz came round and started taking me to activities…and then I got more involved in things" (parents' focus group); while another reported, "They have been absolutely marvellous to me because they have helped me to get to a point where I understand other people better" (parents' focus group). However, two participants responded that they did not know what difference if any community workers had made to the Greendale area.

Attitudes to education

Parents also shared their views on local education provision. They did not appear to believe that the education services in the district brought the parents and community together. On the contrary, the education system appeared to foster an atomistic approach organised around the needs of the school rather than the needs of the local community. Parents were asked to attend their child's school just once per year and they had little confidence in how the system delivered for the children on Greendale. As a researcher this issue was important to investigate. (Greendale was part of a district that operated a selective education system which included the eleven plus examination).

Historically Greendale had been promised a new secondary school but this never materialised, as one parent reported: "they have been promising us a secondary school for a long time" (parents' focus group). Children had to travel three miles to the local secondary schools and this was a problem for many parents who could not afford the fares and did not regard the walking route to school as safe:

> When we tried to do the thing about the bus passes for children, because my son was going to school in [nearby town], they would not let me have a bus pass because the quickest route as the crow flies was under the railway bridge, but he's not walking under that (Parents' focus group).

Travel costs to school were certainly an issue. Adult fares were applicable up to nine o'clock in the morning. As there was no local secondary school, children on Greendale had to either take public transport or cycle to school. Very few parents owned a car. A bus ticket for one week which included peak time travel cost £9.50 and for two children the cost was nearly £20 per week (parents' focus group). Many children cycled to school as parents could not afford the bus fares. During the research, this started to change as the county council proposed a £50 annual bus ticket.

The number of different schools attended by children from Greendale was also an issue, as one parent explained, "Take one street, you could have children going to, I would say, at least seven

different schools" (semi-structured interview). When Greendale developed a youth group for children aged twelve to eighteen years the issue of school attendances was discussed. Nineteen young people from Greendale attended the youth club one evening and between them they were attending nine different secondary schools. Many of the young people had not met each other prior to attending the youth service at Sure Start Greendale and the out of school club was "very good news" (parents' focus group). However, schools did not appear to bring young people or parents from Greendale together.

Having experienced the education system in Ireland and worked in education in the USA, this was an extraordinary finding. In Ireland there were three secondary schools in our area, a girls' convent school, a boys' Christian brothers' school and a mixed technical school. School buses were shared and there was also some sharing of lessons. Children knew each other. In Chicago where I worked, there was one secondary school for all the children in the district. The children came together not only to learn but to participate in sport, school dramas and charity events. Parents in the district also came together to support their school age children. From my experience schools had served to bring children, parents and communities together, but this was not happening on Greendale.

Parental attitudes to schools also seemed to be divisive; according to the community workers, education had left many parents on Greendale "with bad schooling or they were never impressed with the way they had gone through school and what they had ended up with" (CWs, focus group 1). Parents generally did not go into their child's school except once per year for parents' evening. However, as parents on Greendale became more involved in local activities, some started to volunteer to help at the nearby school and one started a netball club: "I got involved with netball…and I train the children after school. It's very good because they love it…It's a good feeling to go to the school because the kids say 'Hello Miss'" (parents' focus group). This parent was starting to break down barriers between Greendale and the school and to foster more positive attitudes.

Engaging with activities and services

The interview data revealed that the Sure Start programme was engaging with parents through the services it delivered. Parents were visited at home initially by community workers. They

encouraged parents to attend services that were being developed in the programme in response to needs that were being identified by the workers during their home visits. Parents shared their views on services; for example, one reported that: “the Women’s Group is absolutely fantastic. It gives you so much confidence in yourself that you can do so much more than you ever thought you could” (parents’ focus group). The growing number of groups proved very popular: “There are long waiting lists for some of the courses” (parents’ focus group).

From the interview data, there was considerable evidence of parents gaining a sense of pride in Greendale. As we have seen, parents were getting more involved; they were more outgoing and beginning to do more things: “Right from the conception, there has always been parent participation”, said one (parents’ focus group). Parents talked about the change of having community workers and other professionals together under one roof on the estate. Parents no longer had to depend on public transport to access information or services; they were available to all and within walking distance: parents were “more in control…I think it’s worked” (parents’ focus group). Sure Start was providing a space for parents to meet: they mentioned the benefits of the building, similar to the community workers (see chapter 7), and its community café: “we do have a laugh”…“because it’s in the community café we have a right giggle” (parents’ focus group). Parents also appreciated services such as the library, play equipment – “brilliant stuff, slides and climbing stuff, things which we couldn’t afford or have the space for” (parents’ focus group) – and informal activities such as bring and buy sales (ibid.). As one said, “There are always different things going on” (ibid.).

Perceived benefits of Sure Start Greendale: building solidarity

As well as the support of community workers, interview participants felt supported more generally in the Sure Start Programme and were clearly able to articulate how Sure Start Greendale had helped them and their children.

Benefits to children

There was a common theme around the way that Sure Start Greendale was providing services that enabled children to enjoy themselves. These included both indoor and outdoor play equipment, IT facilities, art group, toddler gym, toddler groups and baby signing. Social interaction and play were seen as important for children and Sure Start Greendale had provided

these through a wide range of activities. For instance, one participant stated that, “It helps single children, they interact with other children. The children have more friends on the estate” (semi-structured interview). Another said, “They have a lot more support for single parents to come in and meet new people - great to meet others with the same problems” (semi-structured interview).

One mother whose children had been in the child protection framework said, “I feel like a normal mum now I don’t have Social Services any more. I am leading a normal life and that is down to me and Sure Start - Sure Start has guided me” (semi-structured interview). One parent stated that, “Mothers are coming down here (Children’s Centre building) and it’s helping the children” (semi-structured interview), while another said, “With all this help my child is no longer on the child protection register. I feel more confident”(semi-structured interview). According to participants, Sure Start Greendale had also helped prepare children for school. Parents noted the positive effect on children’s behaviour: “This is important. The older children were horrible when they were 10-12 years old, smashed up everything. Parents get more respect now from older children” (semi-structured interview).

Personal benefits to parents

As well as the benefits to their children, parents mentioned the personal effect on themselves. Participants felt different about Greendale after the Sure Start Greendale programme was established; for instance, one said: “I wish everyone had a Sure Start near them as there are so many benefits” (semi-structured interview). Other comments ranged from, “helping with my confidence” and “help making friends for my child and myself” to “developing parenting skills,” and “now I have a place to come to and more things to do” (semi-structured interviews).

One parent stated that, “If Sure Start was not around I would just sit indoors all day doing nothing and the children would not socialise” (semi-structured interview). A parent with a very limited budget reported that the “Bring and Buy (was) very helpful. (I) bought shoes for 10p yesterday” (semi-structured interview), a sentiment echoed by others (parents’ focus group). Another participant who was unable to leave her home on Greendale as she was frightened of the local children said that Sure Start had made things, “A lot better. (I’m) more confident, know more parents and know the (local) children” (semi-structured interview). A powerful comment from one parent was that Sure Start “has given me a life” (semi-structured interview). Similarly,

another stated that, “I cannot thank you enough and this is from me and my whole family” (semi-structured interview).

Effects on the community as a whole

There was a general theme in all the interviews with parents that participants felt better about Greendale since the Sure Start programme was developed and thought that the community had improved: “It’s a lot better than it used to be” was one example (semi-structured interview). One participant mentioned that: “Greendale is a lot better now a lot more parents and children attend the children’s centre” (semi-structured interview). Other comments included: “Great, it’s changed how I viewed the area. I now feel more positive and keen about Greendale”(semi-structured interview).

The word ‘positive’ recurred many times as did the word ‘improved’: for example, one said, “Positive feelings - good support for families” (semi-structured interview), while another noted that Greendale had “improved – it’s a lot better. Not as much crime, not as many lager louts about. It is a nicer area but there is a way to go,” although she added, “but this is not all down to Sure Start” (semi-structured interview). One parent told me, “Now it doesn’t bother me to tell people I live on Greendale” (semi-structured interview).

Conclusion

On reviewing the semi-structured and focus group interview data, there seemed to be little initial evidence of solidarity or a “we-feeling” (MacIver & Page, 1937/1961) on Greendale. However, on analysing the data further, there was considerable evidence that parents felt that both the community workers individually and the Sure Start programme overall had “brought the community together” (semi-structured interview). This feeling of solidarity indicated the potential of Sure Start Greendale to build social capital (Schuller, 2000) within the Greendale area. According to Clark’s model (1996), the focal task for Sure Start Greendale and the Greendale parents was to plan and deliver services for all local children under the age of four years and their parents. Through the interview data, it can be seen that some modest success was being reported by parents, as well as being noted by community workers.

I now turn to the in-depth auto/biographical narratives, starting with Sue. I first met Sue during the early stages of the Sure Start Greendale programme. She spoke positively about her experiences of living in Greendale since childhood. Her views on the area contrasted to the views of other mothers and fathers on the estate. Sue was unusual among the Sure Start parents in having lived on Greendale before most of the new estate was built. Sue moved to Greendale as a young child and lived there through the building of the new estate and the development of the Sure Start programme.

Sue: her history of Greendale

Sue's account of growing up there provides a marked contrast with that of other parents who lived on the estate at a later date and I wanted to ensure that her voice was heard. All quotes in the following sections are from the interview with Sue.

Childhood on Greendale

Sue moved to Kent with her parents when she was two years old. They lived with her grandparents for a short time and were rehoused by the council in Greendale. The family moved into a house in Greendale after her sister was born. Sue's mother still lived in this house and they would have moved in sometime around 1972 at the start of the building of the Greendale estate. Sue could remember the second half of the estate being built in 1974. Sue remembered being told "that half of the Greendale estate got built…then the man ran out of money half way through and went bankrupt and, I think, sold the houses and the land to the Council…That's how the story goes. I do not know how true it is".

Sue remembered a lot of big families living near them: "We were quite a small family (two children). The people next door had five boys, the people opposite us had six boys and they were really big families then". "I had quite a lot of friends from school who moved onto the estate… it wasn't far from where I lived anyway".

A lot of houses in Greendale, including Stean Valley (a pseudonym), where Sue lived, dated from about the 1930s and was called the Greendale estate. Sue could describe exactly those areas on Greendale that would be considered the estate. Sue explained further:

> When I was a kid it never felt they were two separate things, people didn't say you lived in Greendale or you lived in Stean Valley. When I was at school there was never animosity between them…It was still all quite together because I think a lot of people who had gone from Stean Valley had gone to Greendale, so there were a lot of people who were friends (Sue, interview).

When asked what it was like growing up in Greendale, Sue said, "It was great, me and my sister were always saying that living where there were council houses was the best place to grow up". She explained that, "In the seventies nobody really had much money and my mum worked…really, really hard all her life". Her mother was strict, but was "really caring and did her utmost best for us at all times". Sue's parents separated and she would see her father every weekend. When Sue was ten years old, her father remarried and had two more children, and then moved to Wales. He split up from his (second) wife and then lived in Scotland. Sue had a half-brother who was at university and they kept in touch on a regular basis.

Sue told me that, during her early teenage years, "(Greendale) it never had a bad reputation then". She had fond memories of living in the area:

> Growing up on the estate, over in Stean Valley and that, was really good. There were loads of kids so there was always someone to play with…and everyone looked out for everyone else (Sue, interview).

Sue drew a vivid picture of life in Greendale, with "lots of characters down the street". In many ways, her seemingly stereotyped picture was more like the kind of description of a working class area in the 1950s or 60s in studies such as Young and Wilmott (1957).

Unlike the other parents who moved into Greendale in the 1980s and early 1990s, Sue's memories were of "a safe upbringing", where everyone "watched out for each other":

> It was all very protective. You felt quite safe. You felt safe playing out there…We didn't have much money or the best of everything, but we always had other children to play with…And then there was the park, down there on the green as well. And the

> different mums would take it in turn to take about twenty kids down to the park all at the same time, we always did that as well. So yes it was very good (Sue, interview).

The repetition of the word 'safe' and description of collective childcare gives a picture of a close-knit community, very different from the isolation and insecure feelings described by parents at the start of Sure Start.

School

Sue "really enjoyed" school: she attended the local primary school and moved on to the secondary school in the nearby seaside town. When she was fourteen years old her (all-girls') school was closed down, and the local secondary school for boys was closed at the same time. Sue heard that there were financial reasons for the closures: "they said it wasn't productive to have those schools". People were very unhappy about the closures and "there was this big uproar because they told us we would have to leave just as we were supposed to be taking our options". Sue talked of her unhappiness in having to leave her school - "it was a brilliant school and we loved it there" - and when she arrived at her new school, "all the kids there had already chosen their options; we just had to take what was left. We could not even choose what we wanted to do…it was all a mish mash of stuff". Over twenty years later, Sue was still annoyed that both secondary schools in the town were closed down and the impact it had on her:

> I feel terrible, I think now more than even back then, I feel they need secondary schools within the catchment area. We are about the only place in [the district] that doesn't have the schools in their catchment area, so when you choose your secondary school for your children you do not know if you are going to get it or not, it is the other people in that catchment area who will get the schools first (Sue, interview).

As a researcher I wanted to pursue the impact of the school closures on the Greendale area with Sue, who now had children at schools in the district. As we have already seen, many Greendale parents felt aggrieved that their local secondary schools were closed down and the promised replacement in their area was not forthcoming. It was apparent with the building of the Greendale estate that the number of children in the area rose dramatically and it now had the highest children population in the district (KCC, 2008). Sue was clear that for Greendale:

> to be more of a community…you need to have everything…and to have your own secondary school is a must really. There are more houses being built, more people coming in so they need a secondary school. We went to school and it was good because it was within walking distance. If you think now for example, I have to pay nearly £20 a week in bus fares for my children to go to secondary school (Sue, interview).

In addition, her children had to leave the house at seven in the morning to travel the longer distance to their schools. The cost of travel to school was a major issue for me as a researcher, having attended secondary school in Ireland and worked in a secondary school in the USA, where travel to school was funded in both situations by the local or national authorities, to find that on Greendale which had been identified as the neediest community with young children in the whole county, parents had to pay nearly £400 per year per child to attend secondary school. Sue was not only regretful of lost opportunities for herself when she had no choice of options, she was suffering financially on a personal basis with costs for her own children. She had a strong sense of injustice that Greendale parents had the last choice of schools for their children, and was clear in her opinion that a local school was an essential component of a community.

Moving away from and back to Greendale

Sue met her husband at 16; they moved out of Greendale, lived in a flat in Briarville (a pseudonym), closer to the seaside town and had three children. The flat was in a "lovely block, but it was rougher around there than it has even been at Greendale". Sue described an event where there was a stabbing and there were other times when she heard fire engines when somebody had set fire to a house nearby. Sue made an interesting comparison between Briarville and moving back to Greendale in 1994s, where it was "quiet, silent, peace and quiet, I didn't hear fire engines, no police cars". Moving back into Greendale was "like bliss, because it was so quiet". On the day Sue moved in she was offered a cup of tea by a neighbour and she "felt like it was more of a community". Sue's description of Greendale in the 1990s was at variance with its reputation as a "really rough" neighbourhood. She put some of this down to "a lot of not pleasant people living there at the time", as well as exaggeration on the part of the local press, which could "blow it up out of all proportion". Her personal experience was very different:

> When I moved there (Greendale) it was absolutely fine…even in the evening I would walk down to the shop, I never felt scared or nervous…I never ever felt that. In fact, I felt safer there than I would have done in Briarville or through the middle of [the town] at night-time (Sue. interview).

As with her description of her childhood, Sue put great emphasis on feeling safe in Greendale. Her account of bringing up her children there was almost as idyllic as her own childhood memories:

> I really enjoyed living there… and as the children got older they could play out there and there was other children there, other families there who were really lovely. Both sides my neighbours were really nice. In fact it was like one of those dream places to live. You wouldn't have got that anywhere else (Sue. interview).

Having had a very happy childhood herself there, Sue was prepared to question the off-putting media accounts of Greendale, and her personal experiences were once again highly positive ones.

Single parent at start of Sure Start programme

Sue's relationship with her husband broke down and she found herself a single parent with three young children. Sue lacked confidence and concentrated on meeting the needs of her children: she "didn't do anything for myself, it was all just for the children and they would go to bed ……and not long after I would go to bed". It was "quite hard to start with, they were all quite young and I just had to get on with it and then it was the whole Sure Start thing". Sue's feelings at this time were a great contrast to her previous experiences in Greendale; she lost confidence and started to become isolated. She was invited to attend some courses that were being planned and out "of politeness, I said yes, I signed up for a First Aid thing and basic skills computer". She did not feel confident to attend a course on computers, this has been discussed further on page 173. She feared that she might make a fool of herself:

> What have I done? I do not know anything about computers; I am going to make a fool of myself. I don't know anybody who will be there, and I don't even know what I have let

> myself in for and wished I hadn't signed up and then if I sign up for something I will go to it because I feel guilty not going (Sue, interview).

For Sue it was:

> quite good because you sort of bonded straight away with the people who were in the group and the majority of them were in the same position. They were single, with children, on their own, not really having a chance to go out anywhere and so they were all in the same position and you felt oh, I'm not actually alone in this (Sue, interview).

Sue progressed from there: "we then went on, we did the basic skills one and then I think we did an OCN and then we actually did a CLAIT and we all passed, all of us, and we did it". This was Sue's first experience of Sure Start: she no longer felt alone, she realised that she shared common experiences with most of the other mothers in Sure Start Greendale, she was beginning to form relationships with other mothers and starting to have fun. In addition, she was building a sense of achievement and self-worth and developing important skills. These groups of parents, who were mainly mothers, were involved in the early development of the Sure Start programme and, as other mothers stated, their views were sought on a whole range of issues relating to the development of the programme. Sue felt that:

> We were all very much involved right from the word go, all about Sure Start. Every little thing that was happening, we were kept informed. There were all these different meetings for the different things, there was the playground, the building one, the parents' meeting and everything else and as it was growing we were meeting more and more people, and still now I talk to people on the estate that I only knew from Sure Start (Sue, interview).

Sue was able to show just how beneficial Sure Start was for her as well as for the community. There were no venues on the estate to meet other mothers and her comment, "You just can't walk up to people in the street and say hello can I talk with you" was very pertinent. Sue could articulate the level of social isolation she felt on the estate. For Sue, "Sure Start was a great starting point for everyone to meet and get to know each other", it was a place for people to meet and talk to each other and develop friendships and you could "feel comfortable seeing each other

out of Sure Start". Sue explained how she felt depressed following the break-up of her marriage and her move back to Greendale, as a single parent, with three young children. Sure Start Greendale helped Sue and this was also commented upon by Sue's mother:

> After coming to Sure Start for a few months [she said], 'I can't believe the change in you, you look so much perkier and brighter and happier', she said, 'it really has made a change' and that was through coming to Sure Start. She said that 'you were a bit down and not having any confidence in yourself and now you have, you are really more outgoing and everything', so that changed a lot for me, Sure Start did and I won't forget that either. It was really good, we had so much fun and everything, (laughs) it was good, yes it was good (Sue, interview).

Sue's mother, who had lived in Greendale since the 1970s, also had long term knowledge of the area and could see at first-hand what positive effects Sure Start was having on her daughter.

There were benefits also for Sue's youngest child, who started attending the Sure Start crèches when she was ten months old. She was not afraid to meet people, as the crèches "gave her confidence too, she mixed with other children, mixed with other people and I think that was good for her". Overall, Sue concluded, "I do enjoy Sure Start. It was good and I think it is good for the community".

Discussion

Sue painted a very different image of Greendale compared to the other mothers on the estate, although her experiences and feelings went through various changes over the years, according to her age and circumstances. She had lived in Greendale throughout her childhood and had enjoyed it very much. She had seen the new part of the estate being built; she had seen new families moving in and had made many new friends in the process. When she moved out of the estate to live near her husband's family, she found it a rougher area than Greendale; in contrast, after their marriage broke down and she was rehoused back in Greendale, she was initially pleased with the peace and quiet. However, as with many single mothers with young children, she lacked confidence and did not find it easy to socialise with mothers on the estate. Then she accessed Sure Start and found that through talking with other mothers in adult education

programmes that she had a lot in common with them, many of whom were also single parents. She passed the courses and learned that she could achieve even in areas where she had no experience, like computers. She had "felt lonely and quite sad" when she first moved back to Greendale and then she attended Sure Start courses and this "totally changed my outlook on everything". Sue attended the basic computer courses and progressed to certificates in advanced courses. Her "certificates at home" showed that she could achieve and she knew "I can do what I want". For Sue, Sure Start had made a "massive difference", not just for the children but also for the parents as well.

I now turn to the second parent research participant, Adele. At first Adele did not appear as a potential participant in my research project because of her extreme lack of confidence. One of the mothers initially identified was unable to take part in my research as she had moved out of the area. Needing to identify another mother, I approached Adele. Expecting her to say no, it was still important to give her the opportunity to tell her story and have a voice; her story and those of individuals on the margins are not often heard (West & Wenham, 2003). In fact, contrary to my expectations, the interviews went very well.

Adele

Adele was a parent who was initially unable to engage with staff or with children at the Sure Start Children's Centre. At first she did not speak; she was unable to have eye contact with me or other staff members for the first years of the programme, although she continued to attend the centre. She did not invite attention and moved around very quietly with her eyes always cast down to the floor. Adele became very nervous at times; she appeared awkward and self-conscious and blushed easily. She was withdrawn and shy and did not talk with any of the mothers. Conversation was minimal and she used a very limited vocabulary. She also found it difficult to engage with her own children at the centre. However, Adele attended groups and activities at the Sure Start buildings, and over time she accessed a range of services within the programme.

Adele was keen to tell her story, although there were many long pauses where she struggled to find the words to describe her experiences and especially her feelings about her level of isolation. She was often emotional and cried at times when she recalled the very real and painful

experiences of being so alone and unsupported. Adele was able to describe in very great detail what she needed to enable her to engage with the Sure Start programme. It was important as a researcher to enable Adele to tell her story and for it to be documented. It could also provide evidence of how assumptions of service providers in early years might need to be challenged.

Young adulthood

Adele moved south with her family from a northern city when she was seventeen years old. The oldest of three children, she came down with her parents, her mother a playschool worker and her father, a packer in a local power station. Adele had enjoyed school, but explained that she had got mostly grade Ds in her GCSEs with some Es. She felt that she had not been able to do well at school – "not brilliantly" - as there were so many pupils with bad behaviour and the teachers gave most of their time to managing this in the classroom: "very stressful". Shortly after arriving, she accessed a key training course – the only one available - and got a job as a care assistant in two nursing homes for the elderly. However, this was "totally the opposite of what I wanted, as I wanted to work with children." Like Sue, Adele felt that her early ambitions had been thwarted.

Adele found a one-bedroomed flat in a large seaside town and moved in on her own. She was rehoused on the Greendale estate following a severe flea infestation in her flat. She was allergic to the flea bites and her legs became very swollen, so she was rehoused on medical grounds in a two-bedroomed flat on the first floor. Around this time she met Dave, her husband of six years.

Adele had lived on the Greendale estate for over eleven years when she was interviewed for the research. She had moved to the estate when she was expecting her first child. She became pregnant again soon after her first child was born and gave birth to her second child days after celebrating her oldest child's first birthday. Her eldest child was three years old when the Sure Start programme started on the Greendale estate and eight years old when Adele had a third child.

Experience of the Greendale estate

I wanted to hear Adele's experience of moving to the Greendale estate. As she was not local, she may not have known about the history of the estate. As we have seen, many other parents had

very strong negative feelings about moving on to the estate. Adele had no friends locally, as she had left them all behind when she moved south. She described her first impressions of the Greendale estate hesitantly, but in clearly negative terms:

> There was no neighbourhood feeling. You didn't talk to many people…There were really no play areas for the children; there was nowhere to go to meet parents. It was very cold and unfriendly…It was very scary at times…Noisy, very noisy at night... because there is nowhere to go, there is a not a decent play area (Adele, interview).

In the above description, Adele highlighted the absence of local amenities, repeating the point about the lack of play areas, which suggests that this was a major problem for someone with three young children. She also emphasised the lack of a friendly atmosphere, using evocative words to indicate her perception of the estate - 'cold', 'scary'– and contrasting this with nearby towns, where she would go to seek company. Adele was unable to establish a relationship with other mothers; she felt alone and scared, as she repeatedly stressed:

> Even my neighbours, only one talked to me when I moved in… I was pretty nervous, very shy… (It was) scary at night because you had the kids playing postman's knock…so you had noise upstairs, downstairs, left and right. It was very scary at times (Adele, interview).

Adele took her daughter to the local playgroup which was held in a converted house. She described her feelings of going into the playgroup and her difficulties talking to people, especially strangers whom she had not met before:

> I was nervous (pause). I have problems talking to people and meeting people, so trying to get a conversation started was not easy… You don't just walk into a group and say hi. It was not easy when you are alone a lot of the time…It was very lonely, there is no question. It wasn't easy…I never left the house (Adele, interview).

The repetition of the words 'lonely' and 'alone' emphasise the isolation that Adele felt at this time. It is hard to judge how much this isolation was due to the communication problems that

Adele acknowledged, or whether any particular events at the playgroup increased these feelings, but her situation cannot have been helped by the fact that her partner was living some distance away. Her parents and two siblings also lived several miles away, so in Greendale she was alone with the children. Adele explained how things became worse after she had her second child which was an unplanned pregnancy:

> I used to like walking to Tesco's with the pushchair. It was ok… then (after second child) it was stressful because they are just one year apart. You have got one who has just started crawling and one that needs holding…I got very down because I could not go out very often. (The second baby) wasn't planned and it was a shock. There was no real support because my dad worked days… and (partner) had problems with his ex-wife so he was stressed as well…It was stressful (but) it has settled down somewhat now (Adele, interview).

Adele found life with her two young children very difficult. She had little support from her partner or her family members who were not living in the immediate area. The repetition of the words 'stressed' and 'stressful' reinforces how hard she found the whole experience. This was exacerbated by being on her own with her children in cramped accommodation; as she described, there was:

> Not a lot of room…I ended up in a box-sized room and they (children) had the bigger room. But you didn't get a break from the children. Even if they were asleep you could still hear them and you couldn't go for a walk... It was really stressful, especially when they ended up with colds and flu. Even if you wanted a five minute break...you just couldn't have it. I got very stressed and very down, a bit depressed with it (Adele, interview).

The unremitting responsibility of looking after two young children unaided led to considerable pressure; the expression 'a bit depressed', following the emphasis on being 'very stressed and very down', sounds like an under-statement for possible clinical depression. There is no evidence of Adele experiencing any aspects of the three essential components of community as outlined by Clark (p. 42): a sense of solidarity, of significance and of security. On the contrary she

experienced a high degree of social isolation. This was compounded by her inadequate housing, regular difficulties with her neighbours in relation to noise levels, her sense of fear in relation to the Greendale estate, lack of family support and possibly clinical depression.

Accessing the Sure Start programme and adult education

Adele needed a different type of service to enable her engage with local provision: for example, an outreach service that visited her in her home and then supported her in accessing the services at the local Sure Start programme. This is exactly what happened. Asked how she became involved in Sure Start, Adele explained about her first encounter with Penny, the community worker:

> She was very friendly and came and got me and we became friends…It was somebody who came and talked to me and would go with me the first couple of times to the group. She was friendly, not judgemental, very easy going and I could talk to her (Adele, interview).

Adele was fragile: she needed a person who did not judge her, a person who was friendly and open and a person whom she could trust. In Penny, she found such a person, who would keep their promise and come around the following week to accompany her to the programme:

> She was talking about needing help in the toy library…She said, 'Right, I'll come and get you on the Thursday and we'll go and do it'. So it's exactly what I needed, the extra push, and I haven't looked back since (laughter) (Adele, interview).

Penny also provided Adele with a concrete reason to attend Sure Start: the toy library, which would help by providing something to interest her children. Penny not only helped Adele to take the first steps in building her confidence by getting out of the house, she also continued to support her in making further, major changes to her life, as Adele described:

> Yes, from the toy library then it went to the management board… (It was) somewhere to go, adult conversation!.. If it hadn't been for Penny I wouldn't have got where I am now… She got me involved with Sure Start…and she helped me to do my childcare course… Early Years and Care in Education Level 2. I was in the parent and toddler

> and teaching language group... It all worked out because with Sure Start I had somewhere nearby where I could do it (Adele, interview).

Compared to the isolated, nervous life that Adele had lived before her involvement with Sure Start, where she was scared at every small noise, this account is a like a whirlwind of activity and engagement. A real sense of moving on in her life is given, starting with her increasing involvement in Sure Start activities. There is almost a throwaway line about being on the management board and the explanation, 'It was somewhere to go' does not seem to capture the enormity of the change that must have taken place in Adele's confidence to enable her to reach this stage. Not only did she become heavily involved in Sure Start activities, she also started courses in early years – thus fulfilling her early ambitions: "I always wanted to work with children" - and computing:

> (The Sure Start career's advisor) helped me with the funding to do the course. I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise... I was too nervous…I assumed the course would cost way too much, about £300 or something. I only had to pay £15...I wouldn't have been able to do it… I've done the story sack course, the computer courses... Before I had the girls, I was messing about on that (computer)…My husband had a Windows 95. It was fun…I just really enjoyed it…I love playing with computers (Adele, interview).

Adele's repeated emphasis on the low cost of the early years' course - £15 – underpins the economic fragility that was still very real to her. She acknowledged a huge debt to others for helping her to access these courses, including Penny, Sure Start itself and the careers advisor: "I wouldn't have been able to do it; I wouldn't have known where to start". However, she underplayed the inner strength and resilience that she must have found to enable her to continue with her education and still alluded to her nervousness, though more briefly now, in contrast to words like 'fun' and 'enjoyed' which she used for the first time.

Her response to the childcare course showed her learning and growing and this had also benefits for her children: "The childcare course helped me respond more to my children. I knew how to encourage them, hand-eye co-ordination and I think this made me a better mum". Adele learned

practical ways to help her children: using toys such as Lego bricks to help with co-ordination, using distraction when a child was having a temper tantrum and also not shouting at her children. The course also helped her understand that every child has different needs:

> And understand that not all children will walk and talk at however weeks old they are. It made you aware every child is different. They need different things. Not every child wants to be cuddled, some want to be read to. I think it (course) made me a better person (Adele, interview).

Getting involved

Initially in the interview, the degree of Adele's social isolation was striking. The words used by Adele indicated the extent of social isolation that she was experiencing and these were powerful words and feelings which needed to be explored and contextualised. The detail of how the Sure Start programme reached out and engaged Adele was explored in great detail in the interview.

Adele was recently bereaved when I interviewed her and she wanted to talk. Her mother in-law had died in hospital. The family had tried to care for her but she needed full time care for the last two months and they were unable to take on this level of responsibility. Explaining the finality of grandmother's death to the three children, all at varying stages of development was not easy for Adele. She thought the library at Sure Start might have a book and went in and asked:

> I was trying to find out if there was an easy way of telling them (about their grandmother's death). I thought that there might be books (at Sure Start)... I think it (book) helped (child) realise that Nanny is not living in the house anymore…At one point she kept saying, 'Can I go and see Nanny now, can I go to Nanny now?' And we couldn't explain it to her in a way that she would understand. The book made her think and she realised (Adele, interview).

Adele volunteered this information and it was striking that during a difficult period of illness and death she showed a level of strength and resilience in seeking out information in an appropriate book that she could read to her children about death and bereavement. What resonated with me as a researcher was that Adele appeared to understand her own verbal limitations in explaining

death to her children, knew from experience how she could get help from Sure Start and was now confident to access the programme for this help. It was also apparent that, through childcare and parenting programmes which Adele attended in the programme, she understood the important role she played as a parent in enabling her children to access the resources they needed to cope with a close family bereavement.

I wanted to explore in detail how Sure Start was able to reach out to Adele and support her in accessing a range of programmes. This 'space in between' has always been of interest to me. By this I mean what happened in the space between Adele and the community worker when she did an outreach home visit, which enabled Adele over time to have the confidence to access the programme. Adele felt that the role of the community workers was crucial to the success of the Sure Start programme, as without them, "you wouldn't have people to encourage other people to come in. The community workers aren't all the same. You've got a range of characters that will speak to somebody. So I don't think you would have got as many people in here as what we have got now". The personality traits of the community workers were also seen as important as "from the start community workers have always encouraged parents." Visits to parents' homes were seen as very important:

> You're not asking someone to walk into the centre without knowing somebody. If they come and visit you first you can talk to them. They will say, 'I will be at the centre if you want to come and see me, or I can walk around and take you into groups'. They are really helpful. They are easy going, easy to talk to and not judgmental. They listen to you and they may suggest a way to help but they won't say, 'You have to do this'. They don't make you feel like you have to do it. And they will go that extra mile if you need help. They won't say 'Right, I can't help you', they will say, 'Right, I'll have a look at it or I'll see if anybody else knows how we can go from there' (Adele, interview).

As previously discussed (see chapter 4), working 'with' families rather than 'for' was also important to Adele, who saw community workers as being not outside like professionals, but working alongside parents, sharing and recognising the pressures and problems facing families on the Greendale estate. This confirmed what other parents said and how the community workers viewed their own approach (see chapter 7). Adele also valued being able to access the different

agencies working in the centre. There was no other place locally where you could access the health visitor, midwife, speech and language therapist, pre-school teacher community worker. Adele valued that and felt that whatever problem she had she could get help at the centre:

> You also have the PCSOs (police community safety officers) who deal with problems in the neighbourhood…A couple of weeks ago we had kids on the estate throwing things at our doors and windows, late at night…They got it stopped. Without them being here I wouldn't have known that I could go to the police and they are there to help you (Adele, interview).

This anti-social behaviour was almost a nightly occurrence and often went on until two o'clock in the morning. The children were woken up and frightened and they began to say that they did not want to live in the area anymore. Adele finally spoke to the police community safety officer at the centre and the problem had now stopped. Knowing the PCSOs and being able to access them at the centre was important:

> If they are walking around the area you don't want to stop them and say 'look' because everybody can see. But here you can come into the centre and say, '(I'm) having a problem', you can talk to them and it gets sorted and nobody has to know (Adele, interview).

Asked if she could go to the local police station now to report these incidents she laughed loudly and said "no way". She could access services at the local Sure Start centre, but still felt unable to access services in other areas of the locality. Laughter was now part of her behaviour and this was in complete contrast to her reactions when she first accessed the programme. Police services at the centre were better, in her view, as the police community safety officers checked back with Adele if the anti-social behaviour had stopped. All the local children were known to the safety officers and "it's all like a big family basically".

Adele's increasingly active involvement in Sure Start activities, courses and the management group, including helping with office and computing work at the centre, represented a marked

achievement compared to her previous isolation. She recognised this as a significant change in herself:

> Then it snowballed and I am here three days a week, about a couple of hours on a Tuesday and a Thursday. Yes, it's helped me a lot. I certainly wouldn't have had any of the qualifications that I have now. I think I would still be sitting indoors (Adele, interview).

Importantly, she saw this as a way of "giving something back to the centre. It gave me a lot". Adele through her experiences of community workers and the Sure Start Greendale programme was now demonstrating evidence of the three elements of community as outlined by Clark (1996 p.42): a sense of solidarity, of significance and of security.

Discussion

Adele's graphic account of living on Greendale was a powerful example of a young mother experiencing a high degree of social isolation. I listened intently to Adele as she relayed her story. I did not hurry her. I respected her long silences. I was pleased for her that she was able to continue and complete the interview. Her account of Penny, the community worker, coming to visit her at home and supporting her into Sure Start services was clear and considered. Adele was able to accept this support as she felt that Penny, unlike some professionals, was right there with her, encouraging and supporting her but also giving her space to make decisions. Adele did not feel judged or pressured. She was able, with a great deal of support from the community workers, to take small steps in accessing services at the Sure Start centre. She initially helped out in the toy library and then went on to run the service. The allocation of practical tasks where people can feel engaged, useful and valued help to address social isolation issues and this approach was further developed in the programme. The enormity of Adele's progress and achievements was monumental and the effectiveness of the role of the community worker was palpable during the interview. She reported that she could not have done what she did without the high level of support from the community workers, but her own underestimation of these achievements was striking. Many young mothers carry enormous responsibilities for young infants, older children and for their homes and never seek or receive acknowledgement for their huge contribution:

> The promotion of warm, authoritative and responsive parenting is seen as crucial, on the basis that parents who encourage open, participative communication with their children as well as problem-centred coping, confidence and flexibility will also tend to be good at managing stress themselves (Utting, 2009, p.47).

Such mothers work extremely hard and carry on, carrying on, on a daily basis. With the support of the community workers, Adele was able to find a pathway out of social isolation and this was very important to her and she was fully engaged in the process.

Impact of auto/biographical interviews on parent participants

During the auto/biographical interviews I was acutely aware of how the interviews impacted on the participants. The non- verbal communication although not captured on the dicta-phone was in some instances profound. Many participants cried when discussing very painful past experiences of loss, of feeling abandoned, of losing parents or partners, of ill health and moving away. Some of the details are not shared here as to do so would breach confidentiality. In approaching Adele, I sought to include a parent who was socially isolated to the extreme, and through using an auto/biographical approach I sought to encourage her participation so that she could make her voice heard. Adele's powerful story of social isolation, reinforced by the phrase, "There was no place for me", is discussed earlier in this chapter. I had known Adele for several years through Sure Start and she had come to trust me, so she was willing to take part in the research and share her very clear insights. Adele had talked about her husband and her children and the lack of support she felt. She often had very long pauses between her answers. She often cried and could not continue until she composed herself. During the interviews she seemed to "let it all out" (research notes). I did not pursue any particular aspect of Adele's story (appendix 6) she had space to talk. She chose to share the information and appeared "relieved to have got everything off her chest" (research notes). When Adele cried I did not move but maintained eye contact and listened. I wanted her to know that I was there for her and that I was listening. I was confident that with my health visiting and directorship experience I could ensure that participants in some of these clearly distressing experiences in the research interviews could be "held together" (Rehal, 2008, p.43) and that participants would benefit in the long term from the process. Further to discussion (in chapter 5) there was evidence that many mothers benefited from Listening Visits (Turner et al., 2010) and I had confidence in the research process. Another

participant who shared very intimate and personal experiences cried for long periods as she told me things that she had never shared with anybody before. I talked with her the next day and she was relieved that she had spoken out and did not want any part of the interview rescinded. She appeared stronger and I assured her again of confidentiality.

Sue (a parent) welcomed the approach from a community worker to take part in my research. I had known Sue for eight years. Sue was confident and clearly wanted to tell her story. She was able to clarify specific issues about the Greendale estate and compare and contrast the two periods of time she spent on and off the estate. Sue had been involved with the local and national media a few months before our auto/biographical interview relating to an incident on Greendale and was articulate and confident. She acknowledged that she could not have done that prior to Sure Start. She had been a very active participant in Sure Start (see chapter 8) and was grateful for all the support and education opportunities. She wanted to support the programme and was keen to give back to the programme through participating in my research. She clearly enjoyed telling me the history of Greendale and how the Sure Start programme had helped her. She was emotional as she relayed how her marriage broke up and how she found herself back in Greendale as a single mother with three young children and little support.

Cross thematic auto/biographical narrative accounts

Social isolation was a recurring theme across the five auto/biographical narrative accounts with parents Sue and Adele, community worker Liz and partner agency representatives Beth, Fiona and Joan. At the beginning of this chapter there is evidence of the deep sense of social isolation residents felt when they first moved into the Greendale estate. There were many negative experiences of the local education system shared during the interviews and the need for a local secondary school was highlighted. The significance of parents being able to access services early on in the development of the programme was important. I now turn to social isolation.

Social isolation

This social isolation was further reflected by Sue when she returned to Greendale following the break-up of her marriage and before the start of Sure Start. There were no places on the estate to meet other mothers. Her statement that “you just can’t walk up to people in the street and say hello can I talk with you” was very pertinent. Sue was a single parent with three young children

and was feeling depressed when she moved back to the estate. Adele was often emotional and tearful when she recalled the very real and painful experiences of being so alone and unsupported. The lack of play areas and of venues where she could meet other mothers was a major issue. Her descriptive language in describing Greendale as "cold" and "scary" emphasised her aloneness. Her second child was unplanned and was born around the first birthday of her first child. Adele was on her own, she was unable to go out easily as the demands of her two young infants were so great, she rarely saw her husband and had no family or friends to provide support. She tried to make friends in groups but could not easily talk with other mothers. She was alone a lot of the time and this did not help her in making friends. She goes on to say that "I never left the house". She uses words such as "stressed" and "stressful" to describe how difficult she found the whole experience of having two young children and being on her own prior to the start of Sure Start in Greendale. The perspective of Joan (in chapter 9) in which she explains that in order to shape and develop a community people need to feel safe in their environment otherwise "people are not going to interact with anybody or participate in anything". She also perceived that people needed a sense of hope that things might change and that their children might have some opportunities that they didn't have. I observed that Greendale was "depressed" and while parents walked around the estate with their children there was no interaction with others parents and there was little interaction with their children.

On reviewing the literature on social isolation the main emphasis is on social exclusion with the concept of social capital being proposed as a vehicle for understanding community led participation:

> Social capital consists of the institutions and relationships of a thriving civic society- from networks of neighbours to extended families, community groups to religious organisations, local businesses to local services, youth clubs to parent-teacher associations, playgroups to police on the beat. Where you live, who else lives there, and how they live their lives- co-operatively or selfishly, responsibly or destructively- can be as important as personal resources in determining life chances (Commission for Social Justice , 1994, pp.307-308).

There is little evidence of a thriving civic society in Greendale prior to Sure Start. On the contrary there is no history of people being brought together through employment in large industries, through trade union membership, through working men's clubs, through the education system or through other forums. There is no history of mothers attending the same school and developing long term friendships that could support them when they have a young family. There is no history of mothers accessing training courses and learning together. On the contrary there is strong evidence of mothers such as Liz (chapter 7) and Adele and of Sue following her return to Greendale, of their struggles to cope with young children in an atomistic setting without any of the necessary resources or social networks to support them. There is little or no evidence of community (Clark 1996 p.42).

From the research evidence including the ethnographic data Greendale needed renewal. The Social Exclusion Unit (1998, p.68) emphasises that for "effective neighbourhood renewal" there needs to be a "fostering of community links" and an approach to building the skill base, the self-esteem and connectedness of those in the neighbourhood who give their time to the initiative. These connections which bring people together and help develop communication channels both horizontally and vertically across the neighbourhood help develop webs of support in communities like Greendale and this can be referred to as social capital. Coleman (1988, p.105) maintains that all "social relations and social structures facilitate some form of social capital" but some are more important such as residents associations and trade unions in generating social capital as they can be available to those attending for many different purposes. Coleman also proposes that family relation especially the strength of the rapport between parent and child gives the child access to parental human capital.

Education experiences and need for a local secondary school

Schools and education were not specifically focussed on in this research study but during the research process it became apparent that mothers had strong views on their own educational experiences. In relation to the narrative data Joan's assertion (chapter 9) that not having a secondary school on the Greendale estate added to the challenges. A new school had been promised as part of the consultation around the closure of the two secondary schools in the local town (in the early 1980's) but the promise never materialised. Beth (chapter 9) a retired health professional stated that many parents could not afford the travel costs in sending their

children to school five days a week, many went for just three days, and prior to the closure of two local schools children could walk to school. Adele (went to school in another local authority area) describes how she did "not brilliantly" at school as there were many pupils with bad behaviour and the teachers gave most of their time in managing this behaviour in the classroom. Two local schools had closed, a new estate was built with large houses which eventually accommodated families with larger numbers of children but no additional school provision was provided in the estate. A large number of the poorest families in the county were now paying bus fares to and from secondary schools. Sue stated that the cost for her two children was £20 per week. I reflected on this data and my experiences of the education systems in Ireland and in Illinois where transport to school was prioritised. How could children not attend school in the UK in the early part of the 21st century because their parents could not afford the bus fares? The Convention on the Rights of Children stipulates the "right to education, leisure, culture and the arts" and also refers to taking measures "to encourage regular attendance at school and reduction in dropout rates" (United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child). Is the county council with responsibility for education in the areas covering Greendale in breach of the Convention? During this time of austerity further in depth research is needed to ascertain the current situation in relation to parents being able to afford travel to school costs.

Early involvement in Sure Start

The early development of Sure Start Greendale is discussed in chapter four. In relation to the narrative data sets Joan (chapter 9) highlights the importance of emerging leadership and the evolving nature of the programme and the importance of those in positions of power to demonstrate integrity and transparency and in doing so they can connect with the local community. Through this approach leaders from Greendale emerged in the form of a small group of parents, mainly mothers, willing to get involved and this was critical in the overall development of the programme. Joan also emphasised the importance of enabling a "sense of hope" to develop in Greendale. As the programme developed parents began to feel hopeful for themselves and their children and they began to get involved. Adele highlighted how difficult it was for her to access Sure Start in the early days of the programme. She was alone and lacked confidence to go out and meet people and establish relationships with other mothers. Her description of the situation she finds herself is graphic and this could help in relation to the

understanding and planning of services for people like Adele in the future. Rose was clearly able to articulate the level of social isolation she experienced in the estate "you just can't walk up to somebody in the street and say hello can I talk with you?". She articulated how Sure Start was a great starting point for parents to meet and get to know each other. She also describes in some detail her experiences of accessing the first services that were organised by Sure Start. Although she was anxious and nervous about being able to cope with the courses she also saw the humour in her experiences in the First Aid course and how this helped her establish relationships with other mothers. She knew she was not alone.

Conclusion

Before the Sure Start programme, accounts by community workers and parents themselves show that parents on Greendale had little confidence in statutory service provision. They felt that the agencies were unable to meet the needs of their children, especially their teenagers (see also KCC, 2000). There was widespread disillusionment and suspicion of social services, education, the district and county councils, as also found in the external evaluation (West et al., 2001) and studies of the local area (Buck et al., 1990; Kesby, 2000), mirroring findings from studies of other areas of high deprivation (Ranson & Rutledge, 2005).

In this chapter we have seen how parents initially had mistrust of the Sure Start programme itself (see also West & Wenham, 2003; West & Carlson, 2006). Many parents, such as Adele, felt isolated and were unable to develop the most basic of relationships with other parents living on the estate. Many felt afraid, "petrified of the area" (semi-structured interview) and there was a general lack of opportunity for parents and children prior to Sure Start. However, Sue's narrative provides a very different perspective, illustrating that prior to, and in the early stages of, the building of the Greendale estate, there was a strong sense of community. Her account gives a much needed reminder that preconceptions, often boosted by dramatic media reports, can often provide a one-sided view.

Over time there is clear evidence from the interviews of change, with parents expressing a profound change of attitude towards the Sure Start programme and the Greendale estate. Parents reported that Sure Start was a great starting point for parents to get to know each other. They explained that the way that the newly appointed community workers operated allayed the

parents' fears. Parents also articulated that the personality traits of the community workers were very important in enabling sceptical and socially isolated parents to engage: community workers were seen as "good people and the patience they had with us was unreal" (parents' focus group). The need for support for parents is a powerful theme throughout this research study (as in Utting, 2009) and the community workers were seen by parents as very supportive (see also West et al., 2001; West & Carlson, 2006).

As seen in chapter 7, parents appreciated how the community workers were able to help them identify their own needs and work with them in addressing those needs. An indication of the level of engagement is the evidence that parents were now gaining confidence, not only to participate in Sure Start activities, but also to help set up and run courses and take part in the management group. There is also evidence from the parents' interviews of the benefits to children as they now had more friends, more social interaction and access to high quality age appropriate resources provided through Sure Start. These findings echo those of Schuller et al. (2001), who report on the benefits of community participation and argue that the provision of learning opportunities such as these can help develop and sustain communities.

CHAPTER NINE

Perspectives of some partner agency representatives

Introduction

In this chapter, I review the perspectives of other participants in the Sure Start programme: Beth, a retired health professional; Fiona, an administrative assistant; and Joan, a member of the management board. I chose these as they were people who had worked or lived on or near the Greendale estate and in the Sure Start programme in a professional capacity, and whose stories resonated with other descriptions of the estate. Fiona and Joan could also provide first-hand accounts of how the area had changed after Sure Start was developed. These, as Chase (2005) indicated, were retrospective meaning making - the shaping and ordering of past experience. As with the other interviews, their stories were "a way of understanding one's own and other's actions, of organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time" (Bruner, 1986, p. 69). All quotes are taken from the individual, auto/biographical interviews with Beth, Fiona and Joan.

Beth, retired health professional

Beth was retired at the time of the interview. She worked as a health professional on the Greendale estate from 1979 to 1985, soon after the new housing estate was built. She was keen to be interviewed for the research. She had remained in contact with Greendale through health professional colleagues and through providing courses to the Sure Start Greendale team. She was interviewed in her home in a local seaside town.

Beth started by describing the Greendale estate at the time she worked there, which was before Sure Start. As Sue had also described, Beth mentioned that Greendale was built as a private estate but the builder went bankrupt and the estate was then purchased by the local council. Priority families were moved in: "so you immediately get a group of people who had a dependency on the state, so it became a ghetto of people with a lot of problems…a lot of single parents". Beth's use of the words 'dependency' and 'ghetto' had a pejorative connotation and her view was that there were problems from the start: "It was dire when it was first opened, it was really really bad." This contrasts with Sue's account which, although acknowledging some

pockets of problems, was largely positive and emphasised the way in which the media exaggerated negative views of the estate.

When Beth started work on Greendale there was no neighbourhood centre, although there was a church which ran a playgroup and a woman's group. As all the other participants also mentioned, Beth described that there was nowhere for children to play except for "pockets of places" within the estate and a "very tatty" playground, there was a good playgroup in the Scout Hut which was used by some children; "I would have loved there to have been something like Sure Start". There was one expensive shop, the doctor's surgery and the church. A little later, a neighbourhood centre was started by the Children's Society. This was funded by social services. There was a playgroup and a lunch club, but to start with, "it was really, really difficult because nobody wanted to use it. It was awfully difficult, as you could not get people…because people were very suspicious".

This confirms the view expressed by parents and community workers that local people were highly suspicious of professionals and anything connected with social services, as found in other studies (Ranson and Rutledge, 2005; West and Carlson, 2006). Beth's view was that people on Greendale "did not feel they had much power to start with"; as there was not a mix of people in the housing stock, "you had the same sort of groups that pulled one another down; there was nothing to bring people up". Although Beth recognised that people lacked power and resources, there was still an implicitly judgmental attitude in the way she described the downward spiral of behaviour.

On discussing the accommodation on the estate where, as Sue had also mentioned, many of the properties were three-and four-bedroomed houses that could house large families, Beth explained that "some of them (families)…could not afford to heat the houses". In relation to public transport, Beth said that parents had to use taxis "because public transport was very bad" and few were car owners. As in Sue's and other parents' accounts, travel to school for children from Greendale was also an issue. Beth stated that "sometimes kids don't go to school because parents have not got the money to send them"; she emphasised that she had "flagged this up at case conferences time and time again" and in children in need (meetings). Beth said that it was too far

to walk, especially in the winter or if it was raining; families could not afford bicycles as they got stolen. The children did not qualify for free transport to the school in the next town as they lived within the three miles radius. Beth remembered that when parents were at the local secondary schools near Greendale (now closed), they were able to walk to school, but this had changed for their children.

During this time health professionals were doing two year checks on all children: "I did a two year check and found that everybody had failed, so I thought it was no good waiting until they are two, I set something up from 0-3 year olds. There were those two playgroups…but nothing for 0-3 year olds and the first year of life...and that was the time when development started getting delayed". Beth described the early years' activities that she and another health professional colleague undertook on the estate:

> That was five years that we were there, but I mean you still had the same difficult people on the estate… You are lucky in that it is (now) some households only because that brought the estate up a bit and there is some feeling of pride and people, I don't know, you have got a slightly mixed economy there now, whereas we didn't before, they were all with no money (Beth, interview).

Beth felt that the problems with "difficult people" on Greendale had lessened because some tenants had bought their council houses, but it also created other problems as there was less affordable housing available. From her interview, Beth was clearly very dedicated to helping young families, in ways that went beyond her official health professional duties; she had wallpaper and paints in the back of her car that she gave to people who needed them, and gardening tools so that parents could "grow a few potatoes". Her own attitudes were mixed, however, in that she clearly felt that owner occupiers had "brought the estate up a bit", yet she was highly aware of the need for those families "with no money" to have some sense of power and control over their lives:

> The thing is getting that balance between the poor and disempowerment. It's about making sure you're not disempowering people, that you are enabling them to do what they need to

> do, and also to give them support and nurturing which a lot of them haven't got (Beth, interview).

Beth's views tap into the criticisms by researchers such as Gewirtz (2001), that initiatives by middle class professionals are attempts to re-socialise the working classes and as such can be patronising and demeaning. Beth recognised this herself when she mentioned talking to the Sure Start community workers and urging them to find balance in their work, "because it is so easy for them (CWs) to go over the top and get into collusive relationships and they are not actually enabling. And then that is destructive and it reinforces their (parents') sense of low self-worth". However, Beth acknowledged that the work of professionals like herself was not always appreciated:

> In the five or six years I was there, I think we worked very hard establishing things and making sure that people would try to get their needs met and stuff like that. But social services got a bad press (Beth, interview).

We have seen from the parents' and community workers' interviews how strong the suspicions were about social workers and the local council. In this case, I was hearing from a professional on the receiving end of such suspicions and Beth's feelings had obviously been hurt by this, although she made a point of distinguishing her own role from that provided by social services.

Beth was pleased that there had been improvements on Greendale: now "the houses have got fences"; the environment was better looked after and there was more sense of pride in the community, as Liz and other community workers also reported. Beth wanted information on the level of children's speech development when they started school, as for her this would indicate the impact of the Sure Start programme on outcomes for children. This was something that she had previously tried to measure in relation to her 0-3 initiatives. There was a slight inference in the way Beth talked that she had felt somewhat usurped by Sure Start: "(What) we were doing was to raise it (speech development) so that we could actually measure and then you guys came along and so it would be good if you could measure how and what has improved". However, when she heard about some of the language development work in the Sure Start programme, Beth was very positive: "That is fantastic, that really feels good", and she was always willing to contribute helpful advice and support to the programme.

Fiona, administrative support

Fiona moved to the district when she was eighteen. She was recruited from the local recruitment agency by Sure Start to provide administrative support to me in my role as director. She had lived in the local seaside town for the past five years and had shared with me her anxieties and fears about being offered an employment opportunity on the Greendale estate. She did not want to take the job but she needed the money. She was fearful of coming into the area and did not know what to expect. I invited her to take part in my research as she had been relatively new to the area and very new to Greendale prior to working there. I was interested to hear and record her perspective on the Greendale area and Sure Start.

Fiona had moved with her mother five years earlier from the Cambridge area to the local seaside town. There were problems with the local youth in their home town but when they moved into the local district they found "it was a lot worse, (with) lots of anti-social behaviour". Fiona was actually involved in an anti-social incident with a young woman in the seaside town. For Fiona:

> Greendale, it has always had a black mark on it, especially when you start going…nobody likes it, and everybody that comes from there, they say they are all on welfare, they can't speak properly and it's horrible. There are just lots of arguments between different people. It's just not very accepted (Fiona, interview).

Fiona's negative views about Greendale put together people being 'on welfare', not 'speak(ing) properly' and having arguments, as though they were somehow linked. She outlined the areas in the district which she considered 'high class' (her term) and then went through the general areas that she considered "very low class area, you wouldn't want to live there" and this included Greendale. She shared her views about being offered employment on Greendale:

> I must admit when I first came to Greendale Children's Centre, and I've only revealed this to you, as soon as they said Greendale, I thought 'Oh God, it's a Children's Centre in Greendale', I thought it's going to be awful, but I will go along because I like to be open minded (Fiona, interview).

It was interesting that Fiona claimed to be open-minded, while repeating rumours about the area, although in other ways she was quite brave to take up the job, as she had real fears about coming to work in Greendale. She did not know what to expect, but thought there would be trouble on the bus if she had to travel home late at night. I explored Fiona's views about visiting Greendale when she first moved into the district. She had no experience at this time of the area but she was adamant that she would not have come. She said that:

> I just didn't want any aggravation or grief. I thought coming down this end is going to be just loads of grief and there isn't anywhere to hang out either. There are no shops; there isn't really anything down here. So I didn't really bother coming down (Fiona, interview).

Contrary to her original expectations, she "liked it here". She recorded, "You could feel the changes and that the local town was the new up and coming place". She felt that the children's centre was really welcoming and "the teenage thing, with teenagers coming in and out , they are really polite and it's quite a shock for me because I think 'Oh God' (recalls previous incident), and these people are completely different. They seem like they are really trying to do something". Fiona saw how the children's centre was bringing the different age groups on the estate together and saw it as:

> a house for the community where everybody gets to meet. When we had lunch in the café for the first time…it was really nice to see parents talking and all the kids playing. It was really nice. I think that is the big problem with the rest of the whole (area), its community, there is such a lack of it. There is no community anymore (Fiona, interview).

Fiona shared her grandmother's views about community and how in the past, where she grew up in a town, everybody knew each other, helped each other and married each other. "It was a nice close-knit community. Nowadays you don't really have that and everybody doesn't understand each other because nobody is talking to each other anymore". Fiona explained further what she liked about the Sure Start children's centre:

> So I really like the fact that, I really love it here, because everybody gets to talk to each other and some people are a bad fit and some people aren't, or from wealthier families than others, or have a better level of education, but by looking at them you won't be able to tell (Fiona, interview).

In many ways, Fiona's views changed radically, when she was faced with the reality of families from different backgrounds coming together, although the term 'bad fit' was still rather pejorative. Contrary to her expectations, Fiona's experience of travelling on the bus to work surprised her:

> because it's normal, it's just weird.. coming down it is great in the morning because when I get on the bus it is full of kids who are coming here or going to the primary school, and even some of the teachers and nursery workers get on in the morning, so it is not as bad as I thought. I thought it was all going to be dark, with people who were going to start causing trouble and shouting at each other but it was fine (Fiona, interview).

I understood that Fiona had strong views about the Greendale area and these were similar to other views she had shared with me previously. She was surprised about the positive reality of travelling to, and working in, Greendale and this brought about a marked change in her views: "It's weird how there is such a taboo about Greendale; nobody talks about Greendale (and other local area), it's all horrible areas. But once you actually get down there and meet the people, it's completely different".

Fiona was able to articulate her views and experience on Greendale and her stereotypical judgemental views were being challenged. What she was seeing and experiencing at the Sure Start building and in the area generally did not match up with her strongly held negative views. She was faced with a different and a much more positive reality.

Joan, management board member

Joan was a trained social worker and senior manager in the local social services department. She was a member of the Sure Start Greendale steering group which was set up to formulate a delivery plan for the programme. She continued on the steering group after the delivery plan was

accepted so that she could facilitate the implementation of the plan. Joan had worked in London and also had many years of senior management experience in the local area, as well as lecturing in social work in the UK and the USA. She had a very good knowledge of the district and the many challenges facing Greendale parents and local service providers. Joan wanted to take part in the research and to put Greendale "into some type of context". The two interviews with her took place in 2010 and benefited from reflection and hindsight.

Joan told me that, at the time, she was "shocked and appalled at the lack of resources which reached the district in the context of the county council". She thought that the issues faced by the district in general were "identical to those issues faced in some of the hot spots…in London, with the exception of a diverse population, there was poor housing, significant deprivation, higher unemployment, and what I used to term a hopeless view of the world". Joan recalled that there were specific parts of the district that were discussed within the statutory agencies more often and these included Greendale in relation to high levels of deprivation and child protection. She emphasised that:

> It was very difficult to persuade some of the local authorities around to change their policies so that there could be some positive input or intervention in Greendale. The two key policies were unemployment issues and the need to work more closely together to generate or regenerate the area, which as you probably know did come into line eventually across [the district] through the European Union… as opposed to from our own government (Joan, interview 1) .

There was also a major issue regarding housing policy, with the district council having very high levels of private landlord tenancies that were "of extremely poor quality and not particularly high quality council housing, in terms of design and appropriateness to salaries". Greendale estate was built as a private development and the general quality of housing on the estate was good. However, as Joan recalled, the estate did not cater for lower income families without a car or for large numbers of young children and families in relation to community facilities or activities.

Other problems which impacted on Greendale included the housing policies of local and district authorities where families deemed to have major problems were housed in the district and many families, especially those with large numbers of children, were housed on the Greendale estate. As Joan described, "for better or worse, local authorities deemed that (solution to) the families who were problems or who presented a problem to their local communities was to ship them out to this district, and there were plenty of those and I think the stats actually demonstrated that was happening".

The housing and the rehousing policies were "two huge issues" and for Joan, not having a secondary school on or near the estate compounded the challenges. As the community workers and parents also emphasised, the residents on the estate had been promised a secondary school and:

> inherent in that lack of provision was no identity for adolescent young people... There were high levels of drug abuse and high levels of domestic violence based on the fact that they (drugs) were easily available at that point. So it wasn't a community, it was fragmented and it had no sense of identity and therefore it had no way of breaking out of the cycles that it was in (Joan, interview 1).

Through lecturing in the USA, Joan knew of Head Start, thought that "it did a lot of good work" and saw it as the "predecessor" to Sure Start. For these approaches to happen, Joan thought that all the local agencies involved "needed to pool their money, if you like, for targeted interventions in that particular geographical area, which was not a community [i.e. Greendale] and that had to be sustained". Joan's criticism of the then government was that they "did not sustain it (Sure Start) for long enough". She welcomed the Sure Start approach and thought it was "refreshing to have authority from central government to begin to bring people together". There were established examples of good partnership working in the district and her view was that:

> there had to be as no agency would have survived with that level of deprivation, not only in Greendale but across the district. There were key people in agencies and key individuals and key organisations in themselves that felt they needed to work together

> in order to make any difference at all. …I know from my own position in social services at the time that there was a lot of good will (Joan, interview 1).

Joan explained that there was an acknowledgement that partnership working in the district was hard and, in relation to Sure Start, the issue was that "there was such a lot of money at stake, relatively, at that particular time. There were tensions between the agencies as to who would lead, who would front the initiative and who would get their hands on the money basically". Partner agencies were positioning themselves in preparation for the relatively large capital and revenue funding that was earmarked for the Greendale estate. This echoes my own account (in chapter 6) in relation to the Sure Start building plans. Joan recalled that, on the part of partner agencies, "there was a lack of asking, 'What can I bring to the partnership,' but people were asking, 'What can I get out of it for their agency?' and there were difficulties". In the end it was the county council and social services that led on the bid. Joan described the "fraught" bid writing and competition between the partner agencies. Partnership working was hard and "it doesn't always go in a nice graph upwards to Nirvana…there was a big issue with the Sure Start Unit itself, then there was a big, big issue with other political representatives in the local community". Joan also emphasised that there were other voluntary organisations who in her view were "envious". This resulted in "very negative behaviour" (Joan, interview 2). The voluntary organisations questioned why all the funding should go to the Sure Start programme when they were already working on the estate and in their view could do the job better, "so it was very hard".

As I had been partly aware myself prior to being appointed, Joan recalled that there were many challenges prior to the local Sure Start delivery plan being approved, including some "well meaning" but unhelpful attempts at consultation, which "didn't always engage well with the local people":

> There are millions of reasons really… They were promised things in the past by the county and district councils and they weren't delivered. They weren't cynical, they were sceptical and mistrustful but they were still hopeful that maybe this time somebody, in terms of agencies, the government if you like, were going to deliver something (Joan, interview 1).

Joan's account tallies with those of community workers and parents in terms of the original lack of trust of professionals. She recalled that the tensions within the partnership and the several attempts at positive consultation eventually started to show results in terms of the responses from parents and residents. However, this was "not universal" and that is why Joan considered that Greendale was not a community at that time: "It may have been a community as defined by geographical boundaries, but it certainly wasn't a community that had a common goal".

During the early days of the consultation, Joan was also aware that gender issues were emerging:

> The key issue there was that a lot of the females who had put themselves forward to help us move this forward in the community did not have positive experiences of males in their personal lives nor indeed in their professional life (Joan, interview 1).

This was part of the local tensions and also there was "a huge amount of pressure to deliver this - a huge amount of pressure", including a pressure to identify local parents who could support the development of the programme and be the link into the local community, addressing the underlying lack of trust. As the programme got past the early days, however, Joan's perception was that "the tone and the values for the partnership itself, from my own experience of the district council, was quite exceptional in their commitment to make this work…once we got over the early days and began the implementation of the delivery". But she added that, "there was still a lot of convincing to do in terms of perceptions in the community".

As a researcher I was particularly interested in understanding how the programme was turned around so that parents and partner agency representatives could begin to focus positively on what was happening. Joan identified the importance of emerging leadership:

> There was a bit of natural evolution…things changed and evolved... there were people who demonstrated really positive transparent leadership at all stages through the difficult partnership building process. And I think probably the integrity of certain individuals in those early stages made it possible to connect with the local community…Leadership was there and it came from all different places….key to the

> partnership was enabling and allowing other leaders to emerge…..most critical were those leaders from Greendale, that small group of parents who were willing in the early stages (Joan, interview 1).

I explored partnership working further with Joan, and issues of power within the partnership in relation to the capital funding streams for the building, as recounted in chapter 6 from my own perspective. As a researcher, it was important to pursue this with a management board member, who had the knowledge and senior management experience to illuminate these issues:

> I think partnership is hard; it has to be worked at all the time. There is no consistency in the actors, very often people leave their jobs in a long term project like this: they move on, you have got to start again….it is hard to keep that direction and continuity going…managing these expectations is really hard both at operational and strategic levels… expectations change as you move through the process (Joan, interview 2).

Joan regarded the participation of parents in the planning and the development of the Sure Start services as crucial to the development of partnership. With echoes of Gaventa (2006), she saw this as a transfer of power:

> One of the most important values we held at that time was to make sure that this was real power, this was power not only to determine the services and the shape and the place of delivery, but also to have power at the board level to make things happen or to change them and that took a little longer, I think, for local people to participate as opposed to being consulted. This was a completely different thing (Joan, interview 2).

Other values that underpinned the programme, which Joan saw as crucial to the successes of engagement included, "public service values of honesty and respect". Support for local leadership was also seen as vital. Joan thought that the commitment of these leaders helped to create "ambassadors" for the programme and this helped "to generate a wider critical mass, which led to a real involvement in the programme which stays to this day really". She mentioned in particular the way that parents who sat on the management board learnt quite quickly "to articulate their views and to challenge in a constructive way the professionals who came in".

This bears out the accounts of parents themselves, who had gained confidence through their membership of the management board (see chapter 8).

As well as the need to continue working on establishing partnership, Joan's view was that the other "really key" step forward in building Sure Start was the appointment of the community workers, especially because these included local parents:

> This was an important signal to the local community that we were not just going to parachute people in, which is what they were anxious about. If you are hoping to regenerate an area, then you do it with the people who are there because they can probably tell you more clearly what needs to be done (Joan, interview 2).

Joan regarded the "model of community outreach" which was represented by the community workers as vital, as in her view, "any scheme which does not have that outreach model I think is doomed to failure". The model of outreach work by community workers who were local to the community, was unique to the Sure Start Greendale programme and also seen by external evaluators as a model of best practice (West et al., 2001).

> The setting up of the community workers, distinguished this programme from others and I think it still does today…There are lots of families who for whatever reason are unable to reach out for themselves, the only way you are going to try and support them is by going to them, and sometimes going to them for a long period of time before they have the confidence to engage across the board (Joan, interview 2).

Joan regarded the recruitment of the community workers and the setting up of services with parent participation as key to changing the nature of the programme and the development of community:

> I think you started to see a sense of community beginning to or the possibility of community, beginning to emerge at that point… Then this led on to a sense of pride and you started to see all kinds of things, like that is why the building didn't have vandalism…while people used the services that they told us they wanted….they

> designed the services and helped as well with the building. I think in a sense that was a catalyst to a sense of community where there was none before (Joan, interview 2).

I was interested in Joan's view on what kind of factors helped to shape parents' views of community on the Greendale estate. She felt that it was a difficult question to answer but stated:

> My intuition and my experience says that one of the first things that begin to shape a community is whether people feel safe or not…If people don't feel safe in their environment whether that is at home or in a school or on the streets, they are absolutely not going to interact with anybody and they are not going to participate in anything. So for me, where you start to see the emergence of a community is always in my view linked with a sense of feeling safe. I think there is evidence of that in relation to the programme and people did start using the services because they felt safe there. And there are numerous occasions where parents and indeed some children disclosed that they did not feel safe at home and they felt safe enough to say that. I don't think those things can be dismissed (Joan, interview 2).

We have already seen evidence from the interviews with parents and community workers that safety was a major issue. Joan described how parents began to feel safe to come out of their homes and to use the centre; they then brought other people along and it gathered momentum. She contrasted their feelings of being safe at the centre and not feeling safe at home, repeating and emphasising the words 'safe' and 'feel/feeling/felt safe' as central to building community. This echoes Clark (1996), for whom security was one of the central components of community.

Joan also thought that "a sense of hope" was another major factor in developing community, because hope "is an enabler":

> I think what happened was that, as people came into the centre, they actually realised there were lots of other services they could use. They actually started to feel hopeful. I think they felt hopeful that things would change, that their children would have some opportunities they didn't have…the community is much more hopeful now. If you want evidence of this go to the young people's group. They are hopeful (Joan, interview 2).

As well as beginning to feel safe and hopeful, Joan thought that parents were also showing a growing confidence in themselves and in the Sure Start Greendale programme. They were also showing a greater sense of confidence in other people doing the right thing and this was shown through "the fantastic relationship which is developing with the police". The accounts of parents and community workers in chapters 7 and 8 corroborate Joan's views here.

These early challenges were discussed in detail with Joan, alongside my own role as director and emerging researcher. Although Joan considered the challenges were immense for me as director, she thought, "you were able to distil and formulate and implement in your own unique way, which is what you did".

As Sure Start was a new concept, there was no blueprint on how programme should be implemented locally. Joan was quite critical of the model itself, as put forward and shaped by the then Labour government, because the prescribed processes were not always conducive to local participation. Joan described how I operated from a similarly critical standpoint:

> I don't think you accepted the Sure Start concept and then just got on with it, that was not my experience anyway, but there was a lot of critique that went on, a lot of using your local knowledge and your previous experience to try and satisfy them (Sure Start Unit) and interpret what they wanted and also interpret what local people wanted and needed and then try to match, try to find a process that brought the two things together (Joan, interview 2).

Joan's experience and understanding of partnership working at an operational and strategic level helped take the programme forward. Her ability to give space and encouragement to me as director and to parents, who were at varying stages of gaining confidence to participate in the programme including the management board, were crucial to the development of the programme.

Impact of auto/biographical interviews

Beth, Joan and Fiona were clearly very pleased to be part of the research. Beth in particular wanted to share her earlier experiences of being a retired health professional in Greendale. She was interested in children and young families and in evidence based interventions and wanted to help and support the Sure Start Greendale programme through participating in the research. Beth thanked me for inviting her to take part in my research. She clearly felt valued and appeared to have positive experiences of the research interviews. Joan agreed to take part in my research and accommodated our research interviews at her home as by then I had left the programme. She informed me that she had reflected on the Sure Start Greendale programme and had prepared for the interviews. This in my view was reflected in her comprehensive answers. Joan's unique position of having been a local senior social services manager and then a management board member of the Sure Start Greendale programme was beneficial not only to the programme but also to the research process. Joan was thankful for being asked to participate and requested a copy of my finished thesis. Fiona was also pleased to be asked to take part in my research.

Challenges of partnership working

Beth the retired health professional alluded to relationships in Greendale and the strong suspicion that parents had of social workers and the local authority. She went on to differentiate her own role from that of social workers which is pertinent when examining partnership working. The lack of connectedness in relation to mothers in Greendale is also reflected in how professionals operated. Beth distanced herself and saw herself as outside the statutory service provision in relation to social services and the local council. This lack of connectedness in Greendale is also present in relation to service provision on the estate. This is an important consideration when planning services in communities like Greendale. Joan's experience of partnership working and her welcome of the Sure Start approach where" government gave permission" to bring people together helped with strengthening parent participation in the programme. She raises the challenge of short term funding for programmes like Sure Start in areas of great need where long term commitment is needed. Joan also raised the issue of partner agencies having to work together across the district as the levels of need were so great that no agency could survive if they worked alone. There are immense

challenges to partnership working in communities like Greendale where all trust has been lost in local council services, in social services, in education and also in the consultation process itself. Joan highlights the need for partnership working to" be worked at all the time" as the "actors" in the partnership change, the direction and continuity may lapse and the expectations may change both at strategic and operational levels.

To address partnership working and strengthen community, I explore the concept of a community development approach in Greendale this is addressed in chapter 4. I highlight the challenges of partnership working. Rehal (2008, p.42) in the "Ideology of integrated working" endorses the concept of co-located teams as the model for service provision for the 21st century. It also recognises that agencies cannot operate independently of each other and that people's needs are not independent of each other. Evidence in the Victoria Climbie Inquiry (HMSO, 2004) shows how major mistakes happen when agencies providing services to children and families do not function as a coherent group. The Common Assessment Framework and the Children Act (2004) helped lay the foundations to support much more effective integrated working with real advantages for children, families and also for professionals and community workers:

- Sharing of information protocols
- Co-location of integrated teams
- Joint meetings opportunities
- Common training
- Integrated work programmes
- Common referral procedures with single point of referral
- Team based around the child
- Lead professional role
- Common contact point
- More client-centred approach
- More trust in one professional by client
- All professionals have equal part to play with equal status and equally valued roles and responsibilities (Rehal, 2008, p. 43).

Multi-agency working at an operational level is about professionals from different agencies making their contribution to help the client. Integrated working on the other hand is about joining- up different component parts and doing different things (ibid., p,43) as part of the same common end -- integrated "to bring parts together to make a whole" (Webster, 1964). Distinct from professionals merely working "alongside" each other or twin approaches, integrated working has a shared understanding of each other's roles and a commitment and willingness to work together for a common goal. "Fluidity, flexibility and creativity become a whole working approach" (Rehal, 2008, p.43) and this was needed in Greendale to begin to address the challenges of partnership working which from the start of the programme included parents.

Mistrust of professionals

Mistrust of professionals including local agencies and professional judgementalism was a strong and recurring theme throughout the interviews with Beth and Joan. The long history of broken promises and unmet need left local parents suspicious, sceptical and lacking trust in local statutory services especially social services and education. This is discussed in full in chapter 7.

Education experiences and need for a local secondary school

The data from Joan and Beth's auto-biographical narratives both independently raise concerns about the local education services including the lack of affordable transport to school. These concerns are discussed in full in chapter 8. Beth also raises the issue of poor standards of public transport and families being unable to get transport off the estate on Sundays. This was still being raised as an issue within the Sure Start Greendale programme. One parent did organise a petition to flag up these concerns and many parents signed. Beth also highlighted the issue of some parents not being able to afford to heat their (big) homes. Parental and family poverty was an underlying theme in all aspects of the Sure Start Greendale programme.

Outreach community worker visits

The model of community outreach was seen by Joan as vital in Greendale and as a model of best practice. A model without outreach was in her view doomed to failure. Employing local people to undertake the role of community worker which included outreach home visits was unique to the programme and was highlighted in evaluation

reports (West et al., 2001). Joan also had a deep understanding of how difficult it is for some families to reach out and access services by themselves and how important outreach services that "going to them" are in building confidence so that families can engage. Adele in chapter 8 highlighted the importance of outreach services and being able to talk with somebody who was friendly, easy going and non- judgemental. She was, over time, able to access services at the Sure Start centre. Her self- confidence increased and she progressed to taking on additional roles within the programme. Liz in chapter 7 emphasises the vital role the Sure Start programme played in building social support and social networks and without Sure Start "the social networking for support would struggle".

The National Evaluation of Sure Start (2006, p. 33-34) documents the importance of outreach visits and 'We follow the parents' lead'. The outreach home visits were not just about getting families out of their home to use services but it was an opportunity to talk with families and identify which services might be the most beneficial for them:

> It's about reaching the hard-to-reach families, those that are less confident who don't come to the centre and who may not be able to read. Working with families in the home allows us to pick up things that wouldn't normally be identified and issues can be dealt with in a safe place (Outreach worker, p.33).

Outreach home visits give an insight to families and their environment that is not available when families are seen in other settings. It enables less confident parents the opportunity to access services that otherwise would not be open to them. For many families, home visits start the process of building confidence and over time building social networks of support. In Greendale and in similar estates the importance of including outreach community worker home visits when planning the development and delivery of services should always be highlighted within an evidence based approach. The community worker outreach visits need to be costed and included in service planning.

What then are the implications for service providers in areas like Greendale who do not have a Sure Start programme? If where you live and the circumstances surrounding you are as important in terms of life chances especially for children what else do policy makers and service providers need to include in their service planning and delivery in order to improve outcomes for children? A focus on a particular issue such as child protection or a specific health intervention such as immunisations would not address the major issue of social isolation and lack of social capital for many families living in Greendale. The role of the community workers in this research highlights the important part they play in providing a proactive outreach service to all parents especially mothers experiencing social isolation and then encouraging and if needed accompanying them to services at the Sure Start centre. If services are developed to meet local need should the role of the community worker be an integral part of policy making and implementation in communities such as Greendale? Should the local council prioritise areas like Greendale for playgrounds for children and families so that parents can meet and begin to develop networks of support? Do professionals need training on the concept and importance of social capital especially when delivering services to young children and families?

Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed data sets from partner agency representatives, all of whom have had many years' experience and knowledge of the Greendale estate. Beth's experience of being a health professional in Greendale in the 1980s was insightful and very pertinent to this research study. She had over five years' experience of working on the estate. She would have worked with all families with children under the age of five years living in the Greendale estate which was similar to Sure Start Greendale in that it worked with all families with children under four years of age and both would have worked with ante-natal parents. Beth's experience of all the two year-olds on the estate failing their two-year check as their language was delayed resonated with me as a health visitor and also as a researcher. Her account of older children living on Greendale not attending school because their parents could not afford the travel costs set out the stark reality for some children and families living in Greendale. She did see some improvement with the sale of council houses and the increase of owner occupiers on Greendale, and generally welcomed the Sure Start initiatives. Fiona too saw improvements and was pleasantly surprised at how great a sense of community there was in the Sure Start children's centre and Greendale more generally, contrary to her preconceptions. Joan's experience of the area and her senior

management knowledge helped identify the key elements of developing a community where there was none, helped identify the importance of partnership working and the constant commitment needed to keep it going, and identified some of the major factors that helped to develop a sense of community.

These echo the key components identified by Clark (1996): security, significance and solidarity. Key themes including, challenges of partnership working, professional mistrust and education experiences are further discussed in a cross-cutting approach covering the six auto/biographical narratives in chapters 7, 8 and 9. In the final chapter, I bring together the findings and discuss them further in relation to Clark's model.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusions

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
(T. S. Eliot 1942)

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on the conclusions of my research. I reflect on the importance of this research in relation to gaining a greater understanding of 'community' in a disadvantaged and disenfranchised community and examine in some detail the significance and impact of this research. I examine the contribution to knowledge and the transferability of the research findings. I reflect on the changes to the voting patterns of people in the Greendale area and in the UK in relation to the Brexit result following the EU referendum on June 23rd 2016. I was aware from the time I started work in Greendale how marginalised and disenfranchised it was. It had the lowest voter turnout in the county and now in 2016 it had two new polling stations on the estate both in the Sure Start building. As a researcher studying community I was interested to document the voter outcomes for the Greendale estate in relation to the referendum. I also reflect on and critique the research methodologies used including my insider researcher/outsider researcher roles. I review my research questions and the analysis of the data sets from community workers, parent narratives and interviews with partner organisation representatives (chapters 7, 8 and 9), as well as the contextual and auto/biographical components (chapters 4 and 6). I identify recurring themes from my research findings and discuss these further in the context of practice and policy development, as well as literature on community, drawing particularly on Clark's (1996) model as an analytical framework. Implications for policy makers and recommendations for service delivery on estates like Greendale are discussed. I also discuss the limitations of my research.

The significance and impact of the research

The research was undertaken in an estate called Greendale and covers a period of over eight years (see timeline in appendix 1), tracing the lives and the experiences of parents and community workers and providing an in depth study of the challenges of social isolation experienced by parents on the estate. My initial interest in undertaking this research began in 2000 when I was appointed director of the programme and the research proposal was accepted by Canterbury Christ Church in 2004, when my research started officially. During this time (2000-2004) I familiarised myself with parents, community workers and the Greendale estate which became the site for the research study. I read extensively especially on research methodologies and could begin to apply these to the research setting. My research was undertaken while I was the director at a particular point and time in the development of the Sure Start Greendale programme. Most of the data gathering was undertaken between 2006 and 2008. The views of research participants are specific to what was happening in the life of the programme and the personal lives of the participants at the time of the interviews. I have endeavoured to understand the lives and perspectives of participants and to tell their stories in a nuanced and interesting way by using direct quotes relating to their experiences. This data remains constant and is specific to Greendale and a particular period in the development of the Sure Start programme and this does not change over time. I had a few academic interruptions to my studies due to deaths within my immediate family and this caused delays and I submitted my completed thesis in 2015. Following this I had the opportunity to add additional information regarding the EU referendum result (June 16th 2016).

This research is significant as it sought to gain a greater understanding of an estate called Greendale which was described as being "on the edge". It sought to answer questions on the nature of community in what was described as an atomistic estate. For example, the research suggested that prior to Sure Start there had been little or no evidence of 'community' within Greendale (Clark 1996, p.42) with no shared common history on the estate. There was strong evidence of mothers with little support struggling to raise young children in an atomistic setting without the

necessary resources or social networks to support them. The significance and impact of the lack of community in Greendale was stark and clearly evidenced by community workers, parents and partner agencies (chapters 7, 8 and 9). A focus on the environment in Greendale and a critical analysis of this data highlights the shortcomings of the statutory agencies in relation to planning for large numbers of families with young children being rehoused in Greendale. There was no investment in the infrastructure in the estate which was needed to support these families and many families were unable to access shops or schools easily. The Greendale estate is an example of a physical environment not designed or developed with the needs of the majority of its inhabitants in mind. This is a powerful example of neglect by the statutory agencies and often such neglect of the weak and excluded is not acknowledged, but blame is apportioned to those weak and poor for the problems in their lives (Furedi, 2001). This can be traced back to systemic but well- hidden and often unacknowledged privileges for the haves and stigma for the have-nots (ibid.).

The significance of this research thesis in relation to our understanding of community in general and also in relation to a specific community called Greendale needs to be appropriately acknowledged. There is clear evidence of positive change on the estate due to the Sure Start intervention. Whereas at the beginning of the Sure Start programme, young mothers on the estate had been struggling to develop relationships with other mothers, following Sure Start, parents were able to meet up in the Sure Start building and establish meaningful relationships with other parents. They were able, with some needing additional support from the community workers, to access a range of services within the Sure Start programme which had been valued and there was evidence of 90% of parents with young children being involved in the programme.

The significance and impact of the research in relation to the delivery of the Sure Start building is important as it evidenced the positive change in the Greendale estate in relation to the environment “It was something for everybody in the area, not for all the outsiders” (Penny, chapter 7). For the first time parents on Greendale

had a place to go, a place to meet and a place to talk with other parents. There is evidence that the Sure Start building and programme brought people together. It gave a focal point to parents on Greendale where there was none before (chapters 7 and 8), and addressed the shortcomings in relation to the environment, security and opportunities for interaction (Clark, 1996). Many of the mothers attending the women's group were experiencing (or had experienced) domestic abuse (chapter 6), the group provided a safe space for them to talk in confidence and to receive support (chapter 8). This sharing of similar painful and intimate experiences helped mothers to develop a common bond, a common understanding and a shared mutual support. A sense of community is often characterised by 'caring and sharing' among the people in a community, showing mutual respect, generosity and service to others (Bachrach & Baratz, 1970; McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Community as a concept is now back as evidenced in this study of Greendale.

The role of the community workers (chapter 7) is also clearly documented in this research study. Their role was vital in bringing the parents together and starting the process of weaving the threads that would connect and interconnect and form a support web, for the mothers on the Greendale estate; Liz's powerful tree analogy (ibid.) gives a strong sense of stability and security. Putnam (2000) describes the ways we can enhance wellbeing by strengthening "connections among individuals". Putnam's research showed that, "social capital makes an enormous difference to our lives" (ibid., p.290). It enhances the close ties between people in similar situations, such as family and close friends. It builds trust, reciprocity, and a shared sense of belonging and identity.

This research is particularly timely. The research shines a light on a needy and disenfranchised estate deemed to be "on the edge" (Carlson and West, 2005, p.4). It provides clear evidence of how residents living on such estates feel isolated, neglected and their needs unrecognised by local government service providers. This research enhances our understanding of community and the associated fragility within a poor disadvantaged housing estate. This is particularly significant within the context of recent political decisions including the Brexit vote to leave the

European Union in the UK. This result is being attributed to large numbers of working class and low skilled workers voting for change. Groups vulnerable to poverty were more likely to vote for Brexit (Goodwin et al., 2016, p.325). These groups had been 'left behind' due to brisk economic change where they did not have the necessary skills to benefit and lacked prospects in their low skilled communities (ibid, p.330). They saw their jobs outsourced and also saw a greater struggle for jobs that followed the increased numbers of EU nationals in the UK labour market (ibid, p. 330). Greendale could be seen as typical of a low skilled disenfranchised needy community where residents feel that their unmet needs are insignificant and where there is a long history of neglect. The findings from this research clearly highlight these concerns and these can be transferred to many other similar communities within the UK. It also provides clear evidence of how a programme called Sure Start can have the potential to address many of the local concerns and begin the process of establishing an effective but fragile community.

The EU referendum and the subsequent Brexit result has stimulated much debate and soul searching within the UK. Whilst the main political parties campaigned primarily on the economic, social, research and development benefits of remaining in the EU, The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) whose 'raison d'ętre' was to take the UK out of the European Union put immigration at the heart of its campaign. UKIP was buoyed by the European election results of 2014 where it took 28% of the vote and became the first new national political party to win an election for almost a century (Dennison and Goodwin, 2015, p.171). The General election result of 2015 showed continued and increasing support with UKIP winning 12.9% of the vote which amounted to almost four million votes, displacing the Lib-Dems and became officially the third most popular national party (ibid). UKIP had campaigned heavily on immigration and fears associated with immigration (Goodwin and Heath, 2016, p. 324) and fused these with EU membership and other issues including the NHS becoming the "International Health Service", pressure on housing, GP surgeries and primary school places (ibid). Research indicated that ethnicity was a strong indicator in relation to attitudes to immigration with a large

majority of white British working class members viewing immigration as having negative economic and cultural effects (ibid). These UKIP supporters tend to be poorer and more disillusioned with mainstream politics and drawn toward anti-establishment political thinking. These are termed “the left behind” (Ford and Goodwin, 2014, p. 277) who have been neglected by the mainstream political parties in their quest for support from the middle class swing voters: less educated, disadvantaged, economically insecure, older and who feel alienated by the system. People living in Greendale and other similar estates that were dissatisfied with the status quo and disenfranchised by a system that did not appear to speak to them took the opportunity to vote for change. These views have been clearly articulated by many of the parents who participated in the research in the Greendale estate.

A closer look at local district council elections indicated a surge in support for UKIP from 1.91% of total votes cast in 2011 to 36.35% in the 2015 election (TDC, 2017). Within the district turnout increased from 42% in 2011 to 71% turnout in 2015 (ibid). In the EU referendum 64% of residents in the district which included the Greendale estate voted to leave with a 73% turnout, both these figures were higher than the average in the county (ibid). When I began work in Greendale I was aware that the estate had the lowest voter turnout of any community in the county and that there was no easily accessible polling station on the estate. When the Sure Start building was complete I suggested that there should be a polling station in the building and this was agreed and implemented by the local council. Two polling stations to accommodate the level of need locally were agreed. On the day of the general election May 5th 2015, I visited the building and polling stations (as the Labour Party candidate for the constituency). I observed long queues with many young mothers and their children waiting in line. I heard one mother tell her child about the importance of voting and how he could go into the polling booth with her and see how it was done. People in Greendale were finding their political voice and now with the help of Sure Start had an accessible polling station. The significance of this research is that it tells the story of the degree of social isolation and neglect on the Greendale estate and gives clear insight into how UKIP with its culture of

blaming immigrants and the establishment for the problems experienced by local residents can tap into this high level of discontentment. There were few immigrants living in Greendale during this study and "areas with fewer recent immigrants from the EU were the most likely to want to leave the EU" (Goodwin and Heath, 2016, p.328).

To conclude, this research is significance as it adds to the National Evaluation of Sure Start and the many local evaluations that have been undertaken in Sure Start programmes. These programmes which were established from 1999 have the potential to benefit from this research as it helps to illuminate different aspects of a local programme. This in-depth study of Sure Start Greendale adds to this important body of academic work.

Contribution to knowledge and transferability

This research study showcases in some detail an area where parents especially mothers were struggling to cope with their young children without even the most basic of community resources. It highlights the implications and challenges of poverty, social isolation and single parenthood. It evidences the importance of including local parents especially mothers when planning change for local communities perceived as being on the edge. This research is about knowledge of a local marginalised community and the application of this knowledge to practice in bringing about change within a community development model. It is a practice based research study with a clear 'How to' approach. The research provides an approach to engaging parents and developing community networks and social capital. It provides statutory and voluntary agencies especially those involved in commissioning children and family services with the knowledge and insight on how to bring about change in local poor communities who have benefited least from interventions in the past. This research is relevant for any marginalised community with a history of failed interventions.

It is the only in-depth auto/biographical, and ethnographic study of a Local Sure Start Programme in England, undertaken by the director of the programme. The research study is based in the highest area of need in the county and boundaried by the Sure Start children centre area. It traces the history and development of the Greendale estate, and also the history, development and impact of the local Sure Start programme. It is a study of how a local atomistic

area, ‘on the margins’ is brought together through the recruitments of local parents as community workers, through the development of the Sure Start team and services and through the delivery of a large Sure Start building. The study provides details on how local parents were recruited, trained and supported to become effective community workers. It identifies the needs of the community and matches these with the skills required of the community workers in order for them to make a difference on the estate. This study also highlights that the ‘way that you do it’ was more important than ‘what you do’ (chapter 4), which has implications for policy makers. This study provides the evidence that investment in communities such as Greendale can make a significant difference in bringing about positive change in relation to the development of community.

This research study demonstrates the challenges for those planning and commissioning services for children and families in relation to social exclusion and accessing hard to reach vulnerable groups. The auto/biographical, ethnographic and action research methodologies enabled parents to have more of a voice. More specifically the experiences of individuals such as Adele and others who initially found local services ‘hard to reach’ need to be heard by those planning and commissioning services, in order to facilitate effective outreach, whereby people can be supported and engaged with services. Services need to be accessible within geographical areas. Local partnerships, like Greendale Children Centre Partnership Limited should have devolved budgets where local people with a deep understanding of local issues have a voice in determining how local needs are met. All service specifications for communities like Greendale should have as a requirement for the service providers to foster mutuality, interaction, social networks and a collective identity in the community. The service specification should also include the skill sets required for staff members recruited to deliver the services.

Further to this research, education policy in the local authority needs to be reviewed to accommodate the needs of pupils on Greendale. This research study highlighted that some pupils did not attend school as the parents could not afford the travel costs for bus fares for all five days of the week. Free travel to school must be a priority for all children from low income families. Local authorities must review the impact of school closures on local communities such as

Greendale and ensure alternative school provision within easy reach, so that parents do not have to bear the financial brunt of increased distances to schools for their children.

This research also highlights the benefits of government funding being allocated directly to a local partnership, as opposed to being allocated to the local authority. This model was used for the allocation of Sure Start funding and it was effective in that it enabled local parents, community groups and partner agencies to have a real say on how funding was spent. Whilst this model posed many challenges in relation to partnership working, it did, ultimately, deliver a Sure Start building and a programme that was accessed by the vast majority of eligible parents. Governments and policy developers should continue to propose this model with variations relating to the evidence base within the localism agenda (Localism Act, 2011). Whilst this research was undertaken on an estate near a seaside town in south east England, the estate is in many respects unique, in that priority families from many local districts and from East London had been accommodated in the area. However, this study could be used to increase the understanding of other communities with a similar history and with similar challenges.

Adele's story could be used to advance the understanding of issues of social isolation. The outreach service provided by the Sure Start community worker was crucial in engaging Adele and this approach could be used in other settings and communities. Liz's story showed the important of local knowledge in gaining a greater understanding of local issues and how these might be more effectively addressed. She lived in Greendale and knew first-hand of the challenges faced by local residents, which was invaluable in her role as community worker. The concept of recruiting, training and supporting local people to help bring about the change needed in their local community must be one of the major findings that can be transferred from this study. The study also provides details of the power of inaction in relation to the capital project. This is a major contribution to knowledge in relation to understanding community and community development. Greendale had a long history of experiencing difficult partnership working and projects that had not been effectively delivered. This study may help those working in very challenging community circumstances to increase their knowledge of issues of power and inaction and how these might be overcome within their own situation.

The role and impact of power within the community

This research also explored issues of power and powerlessness, specifically in relation to how these might change for parents on the Greendale estate over a period of time. There was evidence from the data that for those parents who feel most excluded and powerless, practical tasks, for example helping to run the toy library and being on an interview panel, helped them to focus on these issues, rather than being anxious and overwhelmed by having to be directly involved in active conversation in other situations or groups (Reeves, 2008). Approaches to making a difference in communities like Greendale must be underpinned by the principles of community development, strong partnership working, a vision for how things might be on the estate and engaging local residents to take an active role in bringing about the changes that local residents want and appreciate. A knowledge of power in its many forms (Gaventa, 2006; Lewin, 1943) helps, by providing a focus for identifying and strengthening the positive forces that could be developed to enable change on Greendale and other similar communities.

The choice to use the concepts of power and powerlessness was not straightforward and I grappled with the idea for many months. The context for their use was not obvious in relation to how these could be applied to the Greendale estate. However I knew if I was going to gain a greater understanding of the estate I needed to study and gain a greater understand of the concepts of power and powerlessness. The different dimensions of power (chapter 3) introduced the concept of power relationships for example the relationships between A to B and then I also viewed the relationships from B to A and this was very helpful in understanding power relationships within the Sure Start programme. The relationship between community workers and parents, between parents and other Sure Start team members, between myself as director and parents, myself as director and community workers, myself as director and staff team and also between myself as researcher and community workers, myself as researcher and research participants were all clearly laid out and the power dimension was ever present to me as director and also as researcher. The concept of power not being wielded (Foucault, 1997) but being spread across elements of approaches resonated with me as a researcher. The reference (chapter

7, Penny CW) by a community worker to parents being able to relate to community workers as they know us and we are “not booted and suited” is very significant. The professionals especially the male representatives on the management board were at times referred to by community workers and parents as the “booted and suited”. These professionals were representatives from partner agencies and from outside Greendale. The concepts of “ booted” and “suited” in this context denoted professionalism and power. It also flagged up the power of the community workers being able to engage local parents which according to Penny the “booted and suited” would not be able to do.

Through this research I gained a deeper understanding of power and powerlessness issues within the Greendale estate. Domestic abuse, an example of a power and powerlessness issue is discussed in some detail in chapter 6. There is evidence of parents especially Adele, who was marginalised and socially excluded being empowered to participate in this research. Community workers, parents and others all had an opportunity to tell their stories and have a voice (Letherby, 2003). Through this research the story of Sure Start Greendale has been recorded in print and there for parents and community workers to read. It is also there to help, by adding a body of knowledge on parent and community participation, other disenfranchised and disadvantaged communities like Greendale. Reflecting back and with hindsight, I also wanted the Sure Start Greendale model of working, where organisations worked ‘with’ (Rehal & Langley, 2004) local parents rather than just delivering services ‘to’ them, part of mainstream public service provision. I explored theoretic issues of power and powerlessness (chapter 3, pages 75-81) and applied aspects of this to my role as director and researcher.

Reflections on methodologies

Auto/biographical and ethnographic

By using auto/biographical, ethnographic and action research methodologies my own biography and experience as a health visitor were there within the research process. This approach acknowledged that my background and experiences were important and added to the research study. The importance of “giving voice”, to the voiceless who are often women (Sampson et al., 2008) was a strong motivating factor for this research. My experience was particularly useful in guiding the auto/biographical interviews, pursuing specific topics with research participants and

also in connecting up aspects of the various narratives. I was conscious that in my thesis I was researching a programme that I was developing and that others may have a perception of bias on my part. I have discussed this more fully in chapter 5. My research covered an eight year period (some data gathering took place after the eight year period) and the open collaborative approach within the programme was also reflected within the research process. Some findings from the auto/biographical interviews were discussed with staff anonymously and used to inform practice within the programme. Other findings were discussed with partner agency representatives and community workers. I was aware that my "self" and my influence were always present in my research, from choosing the topics studied, choosing the methodologies used, choosing the participants, choosing which aspect of the data to use and how to present the research findings (Cotterill and Letherby, 1993). Interviews with parents and partner agency representatives corroborated what the community workers (chapters 7, 8 and 9) said themselves, and through this triangulation I had confidence in my research data.

Tonkin (1995, p. 97) defines oral narratives as being "social actions, situated in particular times and places and directed to particular tellers to specific audiences". In this study, the community workers, parents and partner agency representatives shared their stories during 2006-10 about the period 2000-2008, from Sure Start Greendale being in its infancy to the completion of the capital project and the delivery of a range of services. The research data have generated "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1993, p.6) of the lives of the research participants, the Greendale estate, the Sure Start programme and the expectations and experiences of participants, allowing the reader to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues.

Importantly, the methodology enabled the voices of Liz, Sue, Adele, and other participants to be part of the research and to be heard and recorded, reflecting back on past events. These participants were very keen to help with the research and to chronicle the changes that they had observed and experienced on the estate during the course of the Sure Start programme. For example, the chosen methodologies gave Liz space to share her views on the programme, to use her own words and descriptions, for example to "pick up the spark and talk" (chapter 7), and to propose an analogy of a tree to explain Sure Start – a prime example of quality data with thick description (Geertz, 1993, p.6).

Action research

Elements of action research were also part of my research approach. In undertaking this research I viewed myself as a practitioner researcher. I wanted to use my years of practitioner experience in a way that would benefit parents and the development of the Sure Start programme. This methodology enabled me to work with parents and staff members on a range of issues that were of concern to parents. The main purpose of using action research was to generate practical local knowledge that would help inform me and the Sure Start programme on everyday issues. It would also help to engage a very sceptical and mistrustful local community who had in the past been promised a community centre and a secondary school but neither came to fruition. It would also help increase parents sense of involvement and having something to offer that was greatly valued in the Sure Start programme. It helped parents articulate what they saw as the local problems and by doing this they "named" the issues which helped bring focus and a common understanding which was absent in Greendale prior to Sure Start. It also generated local knowledge which was accessible to the Sure Start programme and unlike other forms of research helped to map out the development course for the Sure Start programme. Through this approach parents and the Sure Start programme began to work towards practical outcomes and a shared understanding.

This methodology generated data from both parents and community workers which in turn helped me as director take forward the programme. This approach enabled parents to see that their opinions were being listened to and acted upon which had wider implications for strengthening community engagement. Sure Start Greendale was listening to parents, and this helped parents develop confidence in the programme, which in turn strengthened the development of community within Greendale. Participation is central to action research and by taking this approach in Greendale, Sure Start provided a forum for parents to meet, and an opportunity for discussion and debate and the potential for shared understand and mutually agreed actions (Reason and Bradbury, 2002). It provided an opportunity for the development of live knowledge about the issues (ibid,). The assertion about work practices in Greendale and "the way that you did it" was more important than "what you did" (chapter 4) was also applied to the action research being undertaken in the programme. For me the process of bringing parents together to discuss local issues was as important as undertaking the action research. The process

enabled parents to meet and discuss local issues and contribute to the development of human and social capital which was a priority in an estate described as atomistic. Action research is a pragmatic response in addressing local concerns with the aim of bringing about change in a local community. It provides a framework for local people to work together to "name" the local concerns and put forward suggestions on how these might be addressed. Given the history of Greendale the importance of local parents in the estate coming together to create knowledge cannot be overstated. The assumption that knowledge generates power and that people's knowledge is central to social change (Deshler and Ewert, 1995, p. 22) also resonated. Action research played an essential role in giving a voice to parents in Greendale where parents felt neglected with agencies not caring about them or their estate. Action research played a role in establishing and nurturing community in the Greendale estate. It also provided a very effective process for sharing best practice within the programme as the knowledge generated was accessible and of benefit to the residents and Sure Start staff in Greendale. This is contrary to other research approaches that are often cloaked in academic jargon and often not relevant to the residents in whose communities the research was undertaken. As illustrated by Lewin (1946) who stated that research that "produces nothing but books will not suffice" (Lewin 1946, reproduced in Lewin 1948).

The ethnographic methodology chosen further complemented this approach, as it enabled the systematic study of people and cultures (Geertz, 1993), using in-depth participant observation where the researcher was immersed in the research setting for an extended period (Holliday, 2002). The ethnographic aspect of the research placed emphasis on myself as a researcher at the same time as I was developing the programme. It was challenging and is discussed in detail in chapter 6.

One potential challenge of the chosen methodology is the weighting I have attributed to key participants within my research. A research sample is inevitably selective, and in this study I have chosen to attribute great weighting to some participants, such as the community workers who worked in the programme, and the parents, to ensure that those traditionally considered 'voiceless' were now having their voices heard. The parent sample had to be altered because two of the original sample left the area (chapter 5): developing a Sure Start programme on Greendale

was compounded by the high levels of mobility of the local population. Other participant voices (chapter 9) were included to provide balance and a different perspective.

Critical reflection on my insider researcher/outsider roles

Whilst working in the Greendale estate for eight years I had an insider researcher's perspective (Mercer, 2007; Costley et al., 2011), but also at the same time I had an outsider perspective as I did not live on the estate and had no history on Greendale. This is discussed in some detail in chapters 5 and 6. My insider perspective was invaluable in conducting this research, enabling access to the Greendale estate, the community workers and parents, and also gaining trust among participants. My insider status and full immersion in the Sure Start Greendale programme and the Greendale estate gave me insights and sensitivities to things both said and unsaid and to the culture and priorities operating in Greendale. Also during most research activity I was aware of the key issues both within the programme and on the estate. This enabled me to ask specific questions of the participants that were relevant. This helped in relation to the quality of data from participants. Consequentially there was the possibility also for "enhanced rapport" (Hockey, 1993, p.119) between myself and the research participants (chapter 6). Parents also disclosed private and painful concerns at the beginning of the programme when I was a stranger (page 93).

Being an outsider in Greendale was also helpful to me as a researcher and director. From an outsider's perspective, I had worked in many areas which were now local Sure Start programmes, both as a health visitor and manager. This experience proved very useful in developing the Greendale programme. I had never before experienced the level of atomism. Greendale was very different and stood out on a whole range of indicators as discussed earlier (chapter 4) and these became apparent over the early weeks of the programme. My early experiences on the estate and my professional experience elsewhere were very influential. Research and the notion of community began to emerge as a potential study. In studying community could I bring about change in Greendale initially and possible in other similar areas in the future? This was the question I was grappling with as research needed to be useful to communities like Greendale.

My researcher/director role in Sure Start Greendale and my general immersion in the area influenced all aspects of the research, from the topics chosen for research, to the research participants, to the chosen methodologies, to the analysis of data and to the thoroughness of the research. I was always aware of the power differential. I was seeing new linkages in the data and also seeing new patterns in the evidence when I drafted the analysis material which was done some time after the gathering of the research data. By this time I was working outside of the Greendale estate but did visit the programme occasionally as part of my new responsibilities. I did have discussions with community workers and parents on my draft analysis. I sought to ensure that data which addressed the research questions was prioritised and included. During this period I had the power to choose which data would be presented in the study and which materials would be omitted. This power and influence was balanced by an acute sense of responsibility and ethical behaviour (see 'Trustworthiness' chapter five). I sought to empower the research participants and enable their voice to be heard. This was paramount and accomplished by adding quotes from parents, community workers and agency representatives. "Power lies in the words of participants" (Morrow and Lee Smith 2000, p. 220) and I was careful to include ample quotes from local people. I was mindful of the time lapse between the gathering of data, the analysis and writing up and the potential to overlook particular details of the research. I was helped by listening to the recordings of the interviews, re- reading the transcripts and my research diary and generally immersing myself in the research and reflecting on the co- construction nature of Sure Start Greendale. Although I gained distance during this period I actively sought to engage with Greendale and complete my research. Being outside and on the peripheral I did reflect on my research: Was my research able to get inside participants heads? Was it able to explain, by looking at their lives in a nuanced and appreciative way, their choices and illustrate them to the reader? Could my research enable the reader to walk in the shoes of the participants? Could the data provide a broad and balanced description of the Sure Start experience on Greendale? I tried to ensure that the answers would always be yes.

As director in Greendale I was without any particular professional specialism. I approached the estate as a director wanting to learn about the local issues. This helped me reflect on the benefits of working on an estate and gaining a more comprehensive understanding of the local issues without the limitations of one particular professional perspective. It enabled me to stand back as

a director and researcher and use my health visitor knowledge and expertise when needed in the estate. This allowed me to manage domestic abuse and safeguarding issues when necessary. This knowledge and experience gave me an 'in' to Greendale as I was readily accepted by parents. On reflection I was able to differentiate roles. I understood that early on in the programme I needed to use my health visitor skills frequently to ensure the programme operated safely but this involvement at operational level needed to reduce if I was to move forward and develop the programme. I addressed this as director by appointing community workers and later the health visitor, who were able to take on the day to day operational issues within the programme.

The emotional challenges of developing the Sure Start Greendale programme were immense and the additional challenge of undertaking insider research at the same time was daunting at first. The work of Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (2000) outlined the potential for risk to the researcher in relation to a range of dangers. The emotional dangers I experienced in Greendale were as a director (see chapter 6). I was secure and confident as an insider researcher as I was readily accepted by the research participants as I had many years of health visiting experiences to draw on. The potential cost of feminist researcher methodologies for the health and well- being of the researcher are well documented (Sampson et al., 2008 p. 920). Although I did not set out to undertake my research from a particular feminist perspective I was aware of the more reflexive and more conscious understanding of power relationships within feminist research (ibid, p.221) and the sensitivities towards knowledge. I was also aware of my own experiences and these were essential in my research approach and they did "make a difference" (Letherby 2000). I saw myself as having a duty of care to all staff members employed in the programme. I also saw the programme, with myself as the director, as having a duty of care to parents and children in the estate and this extended to all research participants. I experienced little or no role conflict between being the director and being an insider researcher. Staff and parents evidenced their understanding of my various roles through their interactions with the programme.

I was in a powerful position within the programme and was aware of the power differential between myself and the research participants. I was conscious "that power shapes emotional responsiveness to other people's suffering" Van Kleef et al., (2016 p.1320) and that individuals with power can be perceived as seeing those with low power as not entitled or allowed. People in

elevated positions of power may not be as attentive to the less powerful as they may perceive other individual's emotions less accurately (Galinsky et al., 2006) and then be unable to respond to the grief of these individuals due to fact that they do not understand their suffering. My position of power and how this related to the emotional demands of the programme was ever present in my director and ethnographic researcher roles. I was alert to others' feelings and involved them at all steps in the development of the programme. Feelings of empathy and consideration encourage helping behaviour, thus enriching the wellbeing of individuals in difficulty (Batson et al., 1983). Prior to Sure Start I had worked as a nurse and health visitor and the qualities of empathy and consideration were central to my identity and were now central in my director and researcher roles in Sure Start Greendale and especially so when I was interviewing the research participants as they shared intimate and personal and often painful life experiences. Listening to parents and research participants, understanding and acknowledging their concerns and reflecting these back were very much part of my directorship and researcher approach in Sure Start Greendale. Also see Listening Visits (chapter 5).

Developing the Greendale Sure Start programme was a major challenge and this was acknowledged by many both in the district and at national level. It was very difficult at times to be able to prioritise my research as the needs of the programme were so demanding. The research enabled me to stand back and view issues from an ethnographic/insider researcher perspective. The emotional demands of undertaking the auto/biographical interviews were at times intense but not exceptional as these were similar in many respects to the intensity of interactions with parents on the estate outside of the research process. Also the emotional demand on the research participants particularly the community workers would not have been exceptional as they themselves had many emotional challenges both in their own lives and in their role as community workers. I was very aware of this in the programme and especially so during supervision sessions.

I was aware of the need to minimise bias (Harris, 1994) and corroborate my own accounts with others' perspectives; these form the core of the research through the auto/biographical interviews and focus groups. I was also conscious that an insider may take things for granted, and that making "the familiar strange" (Delamont, 2003) by seeking others' views was vital, although

difficult at times for someone who had lived and breathed the programme for eight years. During the writing up stage I became an outsider, which gave me an important distance from past events. These different perspectives helped me in critically analysing the data. (This is discussed further in the review of the methodologies).

Another methodological question to raise is whether the evidence of community workers' successes in their own accounts is reliable given that my own involvement and power position within the Sure Start programme would have influenced the accounts I received from my participants (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009). I was their line manager for the first two years of the programme and I have to recognise that they may have been telling me what I wanted to hear (see chapter 7); this is another reason why the inclusion of other participants' perspectives was vital, in order to provide corroborating evidence (or not). The trustworthiness of my research is also discussed in chapter 5.

These methodologies, including the use of auto/biographical interviews, generated large amounts of data and as the researcher I analysed the data sets in the context of addressing the research questions.

Focus on research questions

i)What perceptions do community workers, parents and other stakeholders have of the Greendale estate and how might these have changed over time in the context of the Sure Start programme?

From the interview data, (including that in chapter 8 'Moving into Greendale' and from my ethnographic research), at the time the Sure Start programme was set up, neither the majority of the parents with young children living in Greendale or the recently appointed community workers had willingly chosen to live on the estate. Many were rehoused on the estate following a relationship breakdown, while others were there because of financial or housing difficulties. Families were rehoused on Greendale from priority lists from the local and the surrounding districts and also in the past from London (Kesby, 2000). There was considerable evidence from the interview data of the dismay shown by parents when they were told that they were being rehoused on Greendale, with some choosing not to use the word Greendale in their address. There were exceptions like Sue, who had lived in Greendale as a child and had positive

experiences; she recalled having lots of children to play with and adults who looked out for the children. This was before the development of a large housing estate, the subsequent housing of large numbers of families with children without the infrastructure to support this change, and before the estate became run down (Kesby, 2000). But generally, Greendale was perceived as a place where you would not choose to live and its reputation was poor, (see chapters 4- 9).

Prior to Sure Start, the interview data highlights the perceptions parents had of the Greendale estate, in that they had little in common with each other, and little shared history as they did know each other from school and had not worked together. Greendale was essentially an atomistic geographical area (Buck et al., 2000; Kesby, 2000), with very little commonality which made partnership working extremely challenging.

Initially Sure Start was perceived by parents as being part of social services. Parents were very sceptical and suspicious (see chapters 7 and 8) and had poor experiences of social services and education. They had been let down so many times in the past, but especially with the non-delivery of a promised secondary school and a community centre. The 'sheer relentlessness of poverty….that really grinds people down' (Local Delivery Plan, 1999) was evident on a daily basis. The challenges for the programme appeared overwhelming.

ii) What are the factors that shape stakeholders' perceptions and experiences of community in Greendale?

There is clear evidence that perceptions and experiences of parents and other participants began to change slowly and improve. The data indicate that one of the major factors in changing perceptions of the area followed the recruitment of community workers and the development of their work in Greendale (chapters 7, 8 and 9). Three of the four community workers recruited were local parents, so they knew the area and the challenges of living there and raising families in that environment, a factor that Joan regarded as crucial (chapter 9). The community workers described in detail how they began to access local parents (chapter 7), listened to them and developed services that they wanted. Parents corroborated (chapter 8) that the community workers encouraged them to get involved in Sure Start and at times accompanied them to Sure Start services if they lacked confidence in doing so alone.

The interview data demonstrate that the community workers worked 'with' parents, often literally, as parents began to engage with Sure Start. Adele and Sue's accounts, in particular, show how parents were able to access information about services and training opportunities through the community workers and in doing so gained in confidence as well as skills. Community workers described themselves variously as the "central wheel" of the Sure Start programme (Liz, chapter 7) and a "boost" to parents (Barbara, chapter 7); they believed that they had changed "a lot of families lives for the better" (ibid.) because of the collaborative, supportive way that they worked, and this was corroborated by the parents themselves.

Another major factor in changing perceptions and experiences was the delivery of the Sure Start building. This was a major achievement (see my account in chapter 6) and, as a community worker put it, "this big visual thing" (CWs, focus group 1, chapter 7) which "has put a lot of faith into the parents" (ibid.). At the heart of the building was the children's centre, which provided a much-needed venue for children and parents, especially mothers, to meet and take part in activities. Parents and community workers commented about the benefits of having a community café in the children's centre, especially for parents who did not have the confidence to access activities to begin with, (chapters 7 and 8). Both Jo and Barbara (community workers) referred to the "community spirit" engendered by the café (chapter 7), while parents described it as an informal place to meet and laugh together (chapter 8). The interview data demonstrated that many parents on the estate were now talking to each other, in contrast to the social isolation at the beginning of the programme.

Community and the development of trust, social cohesion and social capital can be traced through the development of the Sure Start Greendale programme. The American sociologist Coleman (1988, p.98) assertion that "social capital is defined by its function" and this is not a solitary process but a combination of diverse approaches which influence the social structures and enable specific actions of individuals within the structure. The presence of social capital makes possible the accomplishment of specific goals which would not be possible if it were absence. Coleman (1988, p.102) investigates the relationship in wider society between "obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structures" for example if A performs

something for B and trusts B to respond appropriately in the future and this then establishes an anticipation in A and a commitment on the part of B and this form of social capital depends on "trustworthiness of the social environment which means that obligations will be repaid". Social capital for Coleman (1988) was a way of describing how people are able to collaborate and it was not limited to the high ranking but could bring actual gains to the poor and most side-lined communities. His work known as the Coleman Report (1966) confirmed that upbringing and community background attributes were more important for developing social capital than formal schooling. His research on schools in the USA in 1966 (Coleman 1988, p.114) showed that Catholic schools had a dropout rate for years "between sophomore (2nd year) and senior years of 3.4% compared to 14.4% in public schools and 11.9% in other private schools". He attributed the comparatively low dropout rate in Catholic schools not to the education but to the social capital of families who have "intergenerational closure"(ibid.) as these families whatever other interactions that they have, they share the same religious beliefs as the parents and children in the same school. In practice this would indicate that parents would reinforce the value of staying on at school not just with their own children but with all their children's school friends. This "trustworthiness of social structures" (ibid.) enables the expansion of more of the same in relation to "obligations and expectations" (ibid). This research is important in relation to Greendale where children in one street went to "seven different schools" (CW chapter 8) and where the Youth Club members (chapter 8) attended ten different schools. Education and how it was structured locally did not help to promote social capital on the estate.

Data from partner agency research participants (Joan, interview 2, chapter 9) outlines the importance of residents 'feeling safe' in shaping the development of community. From her 'experience and intuition' residents are not going to interact or participate in anything unless they 'feel safe in their environment and this could be at home, at school or on the streets'. Residents according to Joan began to use Sure Start because they felt safe there. There is also evidence in the data that some parents (mothers) and children did not feel safe in their own homes. Joan emphasised the word 'safe' and 'feel/feelings/felt safe' as central to building community and this is central to the building of social capital. Joan also explained that 'a sense of hope' was a very important factor in developing community and that hope 'is an enabler' and that local residents on Greendale actually began to feel hopeful and gave examples from the

programme. The model of community outreach delivered through the community workers was seen as vital by Joan (interview 2) “any scheme that does not have that outreach model I think is doomed to failure”. Joan regarded the recruitment of community workers and the establishment of services in partnership with parents as crucial in changing the nature of the programme and in developing community and now on reflection I would add in the development of social capital. Fiona (chapter 9) who worked in the programme shared her assumption about the taboo of Greendale “it’s all horrible areas. But once you actually get down there and meet the people, it’s completely different”. Her stereotypical judgemental views were challenged and she was faced with a different and much more positive reality. Travel to work on public transport for Fiona (chapter 9) was a surprise as it was normal with children, teachers and nursery workers all using the bus, they were coming together and sharing public transport. It was not ‘dark’ with people who were going ‘to start causing trouble’. Fiona’s perception of Greendale had changed as she now had a different and positive experience.

Parents’ perceptions (chapter 8) clearly show how the community workers and Sure Start played a major role in developing trust, community cohesion and social capital in the Greendale estate. Parent views included comments about community worker support “helping me with my confidence”, “she came around (community worker) to my house and brought me out of myself, and now I never shut up”, and another parent said that the community worker helped her child and herself make friends and that the community workers “brought the community together” (chapter 8). For the most socially isolated mothers, community workers did home visits and accompanied some mothers to programmes run at the Sure Start building as one mother reported: “I never went out…She (the community worker) was willing on the first day of my course to actually go with me from the front door to the place where it was”. Community workers and their outreach service helped the most socially isolated mothers access the Sure Start programme. Mothers (chapter 8) reported that Sure Start helped single children interact with other children and that (now) children have more friends on the estate. Another mother talked about the level of support for single parents in Sure Start and that they can now come in “and meet others with the same problems”. Sure Start was bringing people together and providing a forum for parents to meet and talk and share their experiences. Parents in Sure Start were exposed to new models: of going on to college, of volunteering, of working on an

allotment, of using a library, of cooking, of interviewing staff, of being on the management board and others. They were now developing their networks and making connections in Greendale. One parent (chapter 8) who was frightened to leave her home as she was frightened of the local children said that Sure Start had made things "A lot better. I'm more confident, know more parents and know the (local) children". A powerful comment from one parent was that Sure Start "has given me a life". Parents were feeling more confident about themselves and the Greendale area, Sure Start "it's changed how I viewed the area, I now feel more positive and keen about Greendale" and "(Greendale it has) improved-it's a lot better. Not as much crime, not as many lager louts about. It is a nicer area but there is a way to go" and one parent told me (structured interview) that "Now it doesn't bother me to tell people I live on Greendale".

Community worker Liz (who lived on the estate) stated that Sure Start brought "ownership and a sense of community……socially relationships are building up among families that have been isolated…and that services we provide has actually opened doors for people" (Liz interview 1). She continues by stating that without Sure Start "their paths (parents) may not ever have crossed, let alone develop relationships". Liz viewed Sure Start as being the impetus for positive change in Greendale and that now parents were proud to say they were from the estate which was a major change from parents' perceptions of the area at the beginning of the programme. She noted that residents now talk about Greendale more positively and 'did not talk in a downturn mouth way about the area'. Penny (CW interview, chapter 7) stated that prior to Sure Start "there wasn't much of a community" in Greendale but things were changing as the programme developed. Jo (CW interview chapter 8) stated that "Now (Greendale) it's more neighbourly; people are looking out for each other. They are watching out for vandals, they are watching out for each other". Parents were now attending groups and services together, they were coming together. Jo (CW interview chapter 8) identified the Allotment Project as helping to develop a "community spirit" across the generations with "older people, children and disabled people" coming together. Barbara (CW interview chapter 8) stated that "People are meeting up, they are chatting, and they do want to know what is going on in the local area. …..They want their say. They want to feel important. I believe it is more of a community now". The Community Café was identified as important in developing community and social capital "even if they just come for lunch, or to one of the groups, they are building friendships aren't they"? Penny (CW focus

group 1) stated that "each individual's social network has widened because they are all interconnected, or starting to interconnect. More people know more people and they are seeing each other out of here (the children's centre). They are acknowledging each other and that is the difference". Parents are "proud of where they live……they want to be part of things" (CW, focus group 1). Many parents living in Greendale have been let down in the past, many have lost their self-confidence through bereavement and loss. Parents needed a different type of service and Jo (CW chapter 8) expressed this understanding of parents "some of these people have been let down a lot, so they need continuity. They need to know that somebody is going to be there, that that person is going to be there for a while, and that they care…that they are going to be there for them".

The interview data also show how other improvements to the estate followed from Sure Start activities, such as the youth club and local allotments (chapter 7). People started to take pride in their gardens and the general appearance of the estate improved (noted by Liz, chapter 7; Beth, chapter 9). The community workers talked about noticing "a lift in the estate, now it did not seem so run down" (CWs, focus group 1). The local district council started to invest in the estate in relation to improving the council accommodation and this was also acknowledged by parents and by Sure Start.

From the interview data, there is clear evidence that the community workers played a major role in changing parents' perceptions of Sure Start Greendale and in bringing about change for parents in the Greendale estate. Indeed, their role stands out as one of the key factors, alongside the Sure Start programme itself, its building and activities, in developing community in Greendale. Interviews with parents and partner agency representatives corroborated what the community workers said themselves, and through this triangulation I had confidence in the data.

iii) How might someone such as the director who is part of the Sure Start co-construction shape some of the processes for better or for worse, and how can this be understood, critically and reflexively?

In relation to research question three, as director of Sure Start Greendale I was confident in my knowledge and understanding of children and young families through many years of experience as a health visitor and NHS manager in London and elsewhere (chapter 6). On the other hand, I

did not know about Greendale or the area until I applied for the role of Sure Start director (chapter 4), so I saw myself very much as a learner, especially during the early stages of the programme. At this stage, I spent many days talking to local residents on the estate, as I needed to gain a greater understanding of the local issues in order to be a more effective director (chapter 6), and learned about the levels of distrust and scepticism that parents felt about local agencies (chapters 7 and 8). At times, in these early stages of the programme, my previous role as health visitor was in tension with that of director (chapter 6); the extent of domestic abuse on the estate was a particularly difficult issue.

Looking back, seeing myself as a learner (although I was the director) in relation to the Greendale estate was very significant. Having a professional background, I had never before taken on a role where I did not see myself as an expert in my specific area of work. I was confident in my role as director in relation to setting up the Sure Start programme but was very much a learner in relation to the Greendale estate. Within this learner status I became increasingly curious about the estate. I wanted to gain an understanding of parents' perspectives in relation to a whole range of issues including their mistrust and scepticism towards the local district and county councils and their general unhappiness about living on the estate. I was interested in digging deeper in relation to gaining a greater understanding. I read the local newspapers and articles in professional journals and was interested to read how Greendale was portrayed. I was particularly drawn to the work of Buck et al., (1990) and the informative qualitative perspective alongside the more quantitative statistical analysis relating to the local district and particularly to Greendale. Local press coverage in relation to the Greendale estate was almost always negative.

Reflecting back, my role as a director learner was significant in influencing the processes in relation to the co-construction of the Sure Start programme. Over time I became more knowledgeable about Greendale. I was gaining a greater understanding about a range of issues pertinent to developing a Sure Start programme on the estate. My deeper knowledge of Greendale, enabled me to question and change the job title of the befriender role and put forward an alternative for the interim period so that the staff could be recruited into post. The concept of power began to emerge. The behaviour of a local councillor "who started to shout and punched

the table" (chapter 6) which was a harrowing experience for me resonated in relation to the concept of power. He as an elected councillor was in a powerful position within the council to influence negotiations with the council in relation to the Sure Start capital building and put the progress of the building at risk as he did not do what he had promised. On reflection I identified the power of inaction and this was crucial in relation to developing effective strategies for taking forward the capital project. The concept of power and then powerlessness became central to understanding the challenges of partnership working in Greendale and understanding the challenges of engaging sceptical and mistrustful parents.

I understood that I could not bring about the changes necessary to make a difference on Greendale alone: a team of local people was needed, who lived in the vicinity and understood the area. They needed a role title which was not "befriender", as this was seen as stigmatising to the Greendale area (chapter 7). I was aware of Lewin's (1943a) field force theory, which is useful in relation to understanding the need for a team of community workers who could engage effectively with local parents. The community workers acted as the "forces (that) needed to be strengthened … in order to bring about change" (ibid., p.172). The community workers helped me to understand the importance of ensuring that the voices of parents and children were heard and fed through the planning and development processes for the programme (chapters 6 and 7). Lewin's theory helped me to consider the impact of the negative factors at work on the Greendale estate and to concentrate on strengthening the positive forces in order to facilitate changes for the better.

The development of the capital project was an enormous issue and, as described in chapter 6, and took a great deal of energy and negotiation against some strong opposition on the part of local officials. There were very tight timescales for the spending of the capital budget and completion of the building, which also created pressures. Although painful and difficult, the chosen route that was steered through the board with the help and support of the chair of the management board, did deliver a building that was well used and easily accessible to all parents and young children on Greendale. The challenges of partnership working in Greendale in relation to the development of the Sure Start delivery plan (chapter 6) were obvious at the outset of my directorship. On reflection my director learner role helped me dig deeper in relation to

understanding the tensions within the partnership. What was at play? Why was there so much animosity? How could I gain a greater understanding of these tensions so that I could put strategies in place to manage them? As I grappled with these issues in the programme I was beginning to undertake a literature review for my research. And the concepts of power and powerlessness began to emerge.

Joan, as a management board member, gave an interesting view of my approach as director (chapter 9). She thought that I operated from a critical standpoint in relation to the Sure Start agenda, that I had an ability to negotiate with Sure Start officials as well as working locally with parents and community workers, and brought my past experience to bear on current needs. These were certainly my intentions and aims. I did not seek views on my leadership from her or other participants, as I thought this would put them in a difficult position, instead focusing in the interviews on their own circumstances or roles and feelings about these. In addition, I was aware of my own power position in the research, owing to my role as director of the programme (Karnieli-Miller et al., 2009; Wolfendale, 1989).

In undertaking my research, I needed to use methodologies that enabled participants to share their feelings about themselves and the Greendale estate. On reflection, I consider that the auto/biographical, ethnographic, and action research approaches used were the most appropriate choice of methodologies, and that there was a good match between the subject matter and participants. There is extensive data in chapters 7, 8 and 9 about the feelings of community workers, parents and partner agency representatives about issues that have impacted on them. This has enabled me to place the research participants, especially the parents and community workers, at the heart of my research, which I had aimed to achieve at the outset.

The auto/biographical methodology used has enabled ongoing reflection over many years where I revisited issues and the research questions many times. It is an in depth study where I had full immersion in the programme and gained multiple perspectives on Sure Start Greendale from the participants to a degree that may not be possible with other methodologies. As a researcher it was important that I enabled all the research participants to explore their perceptions of the Greendale estate and how this may have changed over time in the context of the development of

the Sure Start programme. By choosing this methodology I was able to steer the auto/biographical interviews and explore in some detail the factors that shape the perceptions and experiences of all stakeholders in relation to community and social capital in Greendale. I was particularly interested in how I had explored with all the research participants their reflections on community and the Greendale estate and this has been extensively documented in chapters 7,8, and 9 and further developed earlier in this chapter which includes the views of parents, community workers and partner agency representatives. As an insider researcher this subject was of particular interest to me. I was now hearing from the community workers that practically everybody was speaking to each other on the estate, which was a complete contrast to what I had experienced at the beginning of the programme and also what I had heard was happening in Greendale prior to Sure Start. Within the research process I was able to reflect and interrogate the details of how change was evolving in Greendale with the community workers, the parents and the partner agency representatives. I reflected with the community workers on those early days of Sure Start and what we did differently as a programme that enabled people to come together and talk. How did we get a community talking, if this is what they were telling me happened? The auto/biographical methodology was flexible and accessible and enabled a deeper exploration of complex concepts such as community and engagement. One community worker explained:

> Yes, I think we listened to parents about what they want and we actually acted on what they want. So, they began to believe in something, rather than: "Oh, no, no, no, it's not going to work" (Barbara, CW chapter 7).

The parents, especially mothers were gaining confidence and actively encouraged to participate in the community and in the running of the Sure Start programme. On reflection the work of Woolcock (2001:13-14) resonated " bonding social capital, which denotes ties between like people in similar situations, such as immediate family, close friends and neighbours" were being established. These changes were evidenced through the auto/biographical interviews which also included the voices of the usually silenced. I reflected on this and the part that mothers and community workers played in developing trust and social cohesion in Greendale. Women including myself as the director/researcher, all the female research participants, the parents who

were mainly mothers and some grandmothers were central to the development of social capital in the Greendale estate.

Field (2017, p.24) criticizes the main authors of social capital for their 'gender-blindness' in their work especially since so many associations are gender specific. A review of the literature identifies that feminists critics have documented that most community engagement is "highly gendered" (ibid.) and that a traditional view of the family creates major concerns. This research showcases the role of women in developing trust and social cohesion in a community that was identifies as 'atomistic' and this work is a major contribution to practice based knowledge.

iv) Can our understanding of community be enhanced by investigating a Sure Start intervention?

Research findings relating to community have been addressed earlier in this chapter and shows that there is clear evidence that our understanding of community can be enhanced by investigating a Sure Start intervention. In addressing my research question the study of Sure Start Greendale in the context of reviewing Clark's (1996) model has greatly enhanced my understanding of community which is defined as, "a human collective whose members fulfil a diversity of roles within a recognisable and sustainable whole" (Clark 1996, p.28). In this research such a group consisted of the parents in Sure Start Greendale, who were identifiable - culturally, socially and economically - within the clear geographical boundaries of the Greendale estate; the community workers, most of whom were also drawn from the estate; and others like myself, Beth and Joan, who could be seen as insider-outsiders, yet with important roles to play. Such a collective, in the context of this research, was seen as being fragile but sustainable. Clark's (1996) work allows us to review the key components of community; such as people, environment, interaction, relationships, feelings, values including security, solidarity and significance. On reflection these components were very useful in helping to identify the key building blocks of community but others including gender and culture could also have contributed. These components have helped maintain a focus on the research question and gave depth to the analysis for example in relation to "interaction", "parents feeling that they were no longer alone but shared a commonality with other parents on the estate" (chapter 7 and 8). Also "feelings" has been an essential

part in choosing my research methodologies and to omit them would have been detrimental to a study where parents were sceptical and suspicious and initially had "very little faith and trust" (parents' focus group, chapter 8) in local statutory services. By choosing to use Clark's model the parents, community workers and the Greendale estate remain central throughout the research which is what I set out to achieve. This study of Greendale clearly identifies that in the early stages of the Sure Start programme there was no evidence of community in the estate. The area was seen as an "atomistic geographical area" (Buck et al., 1900). There is substantial evidence in this study (chapter 7and 8) from the data sets that parents were gradually over time able to access Sure Start Greendale services and able to develop relationships and contribute to the development of community on the Greendale estate including bringing "ownership and a sense of community" (Liz, chapter 7).

Implications of research including recommendations

This research study adds to the body of knowledge available relating to Sure Start, community, parental participation and service development. It traces the development of Greendale an area perceived to be "on the edge" (Carlson and West, 2005) and chronicles the development of the first ever Sure Start programme in the county. The research has major implications in relation to how we perceive need and plan services in communities experiencing a high degree of social isolation as experienced by parents in the Greendale estate. It is imperative that this research is published in a wide variety of professional journals including social care, health, education, early years and housing. Discussions are being had with my supervisor in relation to the content and focus of the three planned professional articles. I have had initial discussions with senior politicians and I have met with the Shadow Education Minister. I also plan to have discussions with staff at the Department of Education. I will also seek out opportunities to present my work at regional and national conferences.

The Sure Start Greendale programme has clearly delivered for the parents and children on the estate. This has implications for the Sure Start initiative as this research provides clear evidence of successful outcomes. This evidence can be used to argue for increased and continued funding for Sure Start children centres. Chapter two clearly identifies the evidence base for increased

funding for early years and this research study provides additional evidence to support this claim.

Government policies which seek to improve outcomes for children and families in communities like Greendale should specify the importance of bringing people together in local communities and not just addressing service specifications and outcomes. This was a new approach in the Sure Start programme and should be actively promoted. The development of modern models of community governance such as community mutuals, which are membership organisations and enable local community members to participate and have a say in local issues, should also be promoted. Local authorities, district councils and third sector organisations should promote and support the development of these models, so that communities and individuals, especially those on the margins, can become engaged in meaningful ways and not just seen as recipients in need of services. The Sure Start Greendale approach did deliver and the evidence from my research indicates the importance of investing in developing community so that local children and parents can gain maximum benefits from the services provided.

Training for staff who are involved in the planning and development of community based services should include models of community development, an understanding of governance and the importance of empowering local residents, so that initiatives such as Sure Start Greendale can have the greatest impact. At present, (2017) students studying social work, health visiting, teaching, midwifery or nursing do not receive any training on governance. This needs to be addressed, as those staff members delivering services in communities like Greendale need to understand that the model within which they deliver their services impacts on local residents. My research highlights the difficulties experienced by many parents, and that services provided are often ‘hard to reach’ for those experiencing social isolation.

Local evaluation of services should be integral to service delivery: with staff seeking the views of parents and children and feeding back information to inform the planning cycle. Local authorities must be mindful of how their education and schools policies impact on communities like Greendale and seek to change these for the benefit of local children and their parents. Local and district authorities must be aware that in areas like Greendale, where there is disillusionment

and suspicion especially of social services, alternative approaches need to be taken and supported, working in partnership with third sector providers such as Greendale community mutual.

Limitations of research

On reflection the choices I made in relation to choosing concepts of community, power and powerlessness were very ambitious and broad and at times seemed overwhelming in a research study that was being progressed while I was the director in a high profile programme. These concepts were challenging and this was compounded at times by the part time nature of my research. A deeper more nuanced approach to gaining an understanding of these concepts was a constant challenge throughout the research. The integrated nature of the Sure Start Greendale programme became a natural way of working and this integrated approach was not reflected within the more traditional framework of this doctoral research study. This research study is based in a specific Sure Start programme during a specific period when New Labour was in government and all these circumstances need to be understood when making any comparisons. Being an insider researcher in a programme that I was developing and researching could be viewed by some as a limitation. Could I as a researcher have a vested interest in ensuring a positive research outcome? Could research participants tell me as the researcher what they thought I wanted to hear? These concerns have been robustly addressed in the research study.

Post-script

It is now over sixteen years since the start of the first Sure Start programmes and five years of a Coalition Government (2010-2015) and nearly two year of a Conservative Government. There is now a new Conservative Minority Government in power (8th June 2017). Austerity has been the main political focus and the number of children receiving food through foodbanks has increased with 415,866 emergency three day supplies being issued to children in the year 2015-2016 (Trussell Trust, 2016). The earlier commitment to fund Sure Start children's centres by the three main political parties has not materialised in relation to those parties in government. Since May 2010, the Governments have halved funding for Sure Start and "over 800 children centres have closed. More closures are expected. Many centres which remain have been hollowed out by cuts and are now little more than shells" (Labour Friends of Sure Start, 2014). Sure Start Greendale has not been immune to the financial cuts within the county, but as a Community Mutual limited

partnership organisation it has been able to decide where the cuts are made and how services are realigned. The role of the community worker continues and is highly valued. However, that same role which was mainstreamed across the county has now been lost within a staff restructure. Feedback from former colleagues appears to suggest that this is now seen as an error and the role is being reviewed in relation to the next staff restructure. Research evidence from this study would indicate that this should be a priority.

The most recent evaluation of Sure Start children's centres (ECCE, 2015) was generally positive and showed that the most disadvantaged families were more likely to access specialist services aimed at parents and families in children's centres and were less likely to use services outside of registered children's centres. The research suggests that children centres can have a positive impact especially on family functioning and parenting, and that children's centres are highly valued by parents. It also found that mothers who attended centres that were expanding services (in combination with no cuts in services) also showed improved mental health compared to mothers attending centres that had experienced budget cuts and were reducing services.

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Appendix 1

Researcher's Timeline

August 2000	Appointed Sure Start Director and began to assess potential for research. Kept brief fieldwork notes and documented partnership work challenges and responses from partner agencies to Sure Start Greendale. I also recorded my initial impressions of the estate.
March 2001	Began more formally to assess potential for research.
September 2001	Read wider materials relating to Greendale area and the local District.
May 2002	Began the process of a literature review and had discussions with key partners in relation to planning a research study
March 2003	Began to draft a research proposal outlining the areas of interest and possible methodologies
February 2004	Research proposal accepted by Canterbury Christ Church University and became a formal insider researcher while living outside of Greendale.
March 2005	Began to formulate research approaches and develop my profile as an insider researcher with parents, community workers and the staff team. Fieldwork notes now became a research diary. Ethnography studied to greater depth.
2006	Began to gather data from Parent focus group and Community Worker's focus group
2007	Collected data from Community Worker's focus group and parent participants in the auto/biographical interviews.
2008 November 2008	Collected data from parent participants in auto/biographical interviews, Community Worker and retired health professional. Left Sure Start Greendale and took up a management role in District.
Dec 2009	Interviewed Adele after leaving the Sure Start Greendale programme. I was no longer the director. I was a researcher based outside the programme. I was writing up my research.
2010	I interviewed Joan a member of the management board and Fiona the administrative assistant. I continued to write up the research study while working full time as a manager in the local district.
2015	Submitted PhD research study

Appendix 2

Sure Start Greendale Timeline

May 2000	Sure Start Greendale received Government approval
August 2000	Appointment of Sure Start Greendale Director
September 2000	Established office in Portakabin on school site soon to become a service delivery hub
October 2000	Launch of the Sure Start Greendale programme
October 2000	Established a Sure Start Greendale service hub at local Scout Hut
December 2000	Appointed Community Workers
February 2001	Allocated a flat on the Greendale estate by District Council for staff office accommodation
March 2001	Established a Sure Start Greendale service hub at local church
December 2001	Acquired rental premises in Valley Green Park for expanding staff team
December 2001	Local Evaluation Community Workers in Sure Start Greendale
April 2002	Established a second Portakabin complex in car park on the Greendale estate for service delivery
August 2003	Sure Start Greendale building opened
September 2003	Local Evaluation Sure Start Greendale
April 2005	Sure Start Greendale incorporates as a Community Mutual Partnership Ltd organisation
April 2006	Local Evaluation of Sure Start Greendale

Appendix 3

Focus group and Auto/biographical Interviews 2006 – 2010

No.	Names	Date	Time	Pages
1	Parents' focus group	20.2.2006	1hr 20 min	26
2	Community workers' focus group 1	4.4.2006	1 hr 8 min	20
3	Community workers' focus group 2	5.2.2007	58 min	18
4	Jo, community worker	24.4.2007	54 min	14
5	Jo, community worker	24.4.2007	4 min	1
6	Liz, community worker & parent	25.5.2007	52 min	11
7	Liz, community worker & parent	19.6.2007	23 min	7
8	Penny, community worker & parent	26.10.2007	56 min	12
9	Sue, parent	7-1- 2008	1 hr 9 min	21
10	Beth, retired health professional	22-2- 2008	54 min	15
11	Barbara, community worker & parent	14.10.2008	1 hr 7 min	20
12	Adele, parent	15.12.2009	1 hr 9 min	22
13	Joan, management board member	28.6.2010	21 min	4
14	Joan, management board member	28.6.2010	45 min	10
15	Fiona, administrative support	8.2.2010	1 hr 25min	29

Appendix 4

Semi-structured interview questions with parents

As part of my research studies I am exploring the role of community worker in the Sure Start Greendale team. Greendale was described as an area of high need at the time the decision was made to base the Sure Start Greendale there. I want to try and find out if the Community worker role has helped strengthen the voice of parents on the estate. Do you as parents, feel empowered and enabled by having support from a Community Worker or from Sure Start in general?

Please complete the following as fully as possible. Please add your comments in the identified spaces.

Q1 All families on Greendale have been allocated a community worker.

Do you know your community worker?

Q2 Have you met your community worker?

Q3 Have you found your community worker supportive?

Q4 If your answer to Q3 is yes please circle which areas?

Q5 If your answer is NO describe your experience

Q6 Community workers have worked on Greendale for the past four years. What difference have they made to you as a parent?

Q7 What difference, if any, have they made in the Greendale area?

Q8 What difference has Sure Start Greendale made to the Greendale area?

Q9 What difference has Sure Start Greendale made for young children in Greendale?

Q10 What difference has Sure Start Greendale made in your day to day life as a parent?

I would like to know if you have more friendships and a wider social circle since the development of Sure Start Greendale.

Q11 When you first became part of Sure Start Greendale how many friends did you have on the estate?

Q12 How many friends do you now have on the Greendale estate?

Q13 If the number of friends has increased what part if any did Sure Start Greendale play in this?

Q14 Many community workers are parents from Greendale. Do you see this as positive?

In this part I want to hear your views about how you feel about the Greendale area now and also how you felt about it prior to Sure Start.

Q15 How would you describe your feelings towards the Greendale area before Sure Start Greendale was established?

Q16 How would you describe your feelings towards the Greendale area since Sure Start Greendale was established?

Q17 What part has Sure Start Greendale played in changing your feelings (if they have changed)?

During the early years of the Sure Start Greendale programme it was apparent that there were many different communities in the Greendale estate.

Q18 Do you think that Sure Start Greendale has helped change this by bringing people and communities together?

Q19 What difference do you think the Sure Start Greendale building to parents on the Greendale estate?

Q20 Do you think the Sure Start Greendale building has helped bring parents and communities together?

Q21 What else would you like to say about Sure Start Greendale and how it has made a difference on the Greendale estate?

Thank you for completing this.

Appendix 5

Community Workers' Focus Group

Explore the role of community workers in Sure Start Greendale.

Questions

What impact has the role of community worker had on families in general and on the Greendale community?

What do community workers do?

How do they do their job?

Do community workers influence the wider Sure Start Greendale team?

If yes, how and give examples?

For community workers living and working on Greendale are there any issues around this?

Have there been any changes on Greendale over the past five years?

If yes, what are they?

Have the community workers impacted on these?

If yes, how have they impacted?

Can you give some examples?

How do you feel?

Has the community worker role helped to empower parents on the Greendale estate?

If yes, can you give some examples?

Greendale was identified as "a high need area" in relation to the development of the Sure Start Greendale programme.

Did this description impact on local parents/residents?

Has Sure Start Greendale helped change the attitudes of residents towards the area?

Appendix 6

Auto/biographical interview – an example

Auto/biographical interview (Adele) an example of some of the key questions asked. Other questions followed up what the interviewee said and these are not included here.

We are recording this at Greendale and Adele is here with me. We are doing this under the guidance and ethical code of the local university as part of my PhD research and you have the right, Adele, to withdraw from this research at any time and today you can ask me to stop at any time. Is that all right?

Can you tell me a little bit about Greendale? You were here before the Sure Start Greendale programme started?

I started here in August 2000 and I would like to hear how you felt about it and saw Greendale at that particular time?

So how was life with children on Greendale?

Was there any place for you to go as a mum? Did you feel there was any place for you?

Tell me a little bit about your childhood? Where were you born?

So what did you do when you came here?

Tell me about your time on Greendale? Tell me about your first impressions of Greendale?

So let's move along. You had your second child, how was life after that? How was it with two little children?

So you are still living on Greendale and you have had your third child and this was when Sure Start was here. What helped you engage with Sure Start?

Let's go back to Greendale with your three children and Penny has helped you into the programme. Would you say that is what other mothers would want in your position, something concrete to come in and do?

Would you have been able to do that course if it wasn't for Sure Start Greendale?

How did doing that course help you?

So tell me about being at home with three children?

Talk to me about how it felt coming into the building in the early days, having the support?

What did you do after that?

Tell me about that telephone call- I would like to know about this?

Tell me about the interview?

Did your husband look after the children?

Tell me about how you felt on the course?

Have you got a job or what kind of work?

How does that feel to be able to come back here?

Tell me a little bit about how you think the role of the community worker has been in Sure Start Greendale?

What views did you have at the beginning of the programme?